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The Knife's Edge: Empathy in Poetry,
Science Writing, and Sacrifice

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that empathy is a nuanced and paradoxical capacity, which in action puts at risk 1) the common language perceptions of empathy as the intuitive grasp of another's emotional state, 2) our ability to set ourselves empathically apart from those who commit reprehensible acts, and 3) even our very belief in certain forms of severe trauma. The initial dissertation section, "Preliminary Materials," explores common language approaches to empathy alongside more technical definitions of empathy and other terms, especially sympathy. I contend for a version of empathy as a fundamental human capacity which may be deployed in both pro- and anti-social fashions. Case Study I presents four poems. Analysis of the first poem leads to the conclusion that empathy as popularly conceived is impossible. The writer finds in the poem not a representation of the other, but a reflection of herself. Analyses of the other three poems invoke current scientific thinking in the areas of brain science, psychology, and neuro-linguistics. Within this context, a form of empathy which is more like mirroring or resonance is recuperated as meaningful. Case Study II examines the strategies by which an article about an Incan sacrificial site engages and disengages the reader's empathy with various parties, including the writer of the article, the Incan priests and other adults, and the sacrificed Incan children. I conclude that empathy potentially leads to identification with not only the victims, but also the perpetrators, of violence. Further, many textual strategies work precisely to inhibit or deflect this latter identification. Case Study III attempts, by a series of analogies, to illuminate at depth the experience of severe trauma and its aftermaths, and thereby to establish an empathic connection for the reader with the experience of such trauma. A Coda claims that, while Case Study III succeeds in many ways, certain aspects also fail, thereby pointing to ways in which empathy, by inducing trauma in the beholder, can actively contribute to the inexpressibility of trauma and consequent disbelief. "Hearts and Tongues," a creative essay, closes the dissertation by inter-weaving personal and academic experiences of empathy.

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My children, Jonathan, Matthew, and Anna, and my friends make life, and hence this thesis a joyful, and therefore possible, affair.

To Thomas Jay Cooper, lover and spouse

DISSERTATION INTRODUCTION

A Story

For nearly fifteen years, I have camped annually with one of my most intimate friends, a seventy-five-year-old poet and publisher named Luci. In the summer of 2004, we started out from Vancouver very early in the morning and headed for the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. By the time we arrived at the Elwha River, set up our tent under the trees, and made our supper over the Coleman stove, we were both very tired. Although it was still early, we decided to go to bed just after we ate.

Campgrounds at some distance from towns and cities tend to be very safe, but signs had been posted on two notice boards about recent thefts, so just prior to entering the tent I said to Luci, "We'd better lock the car." She handed me the key fob for her brand new Outback, and I pushed the lock button. "How do I know it's locked?" I asked.

"Oh, the lights flash."

But our tent was a good seventy-five feet from the car, perhaps more, and it was still quite light out. My view of the car was also blocked by a sort of metal box on legs—a bear-proof storage container for food. We thought we could hear a tiny beep, so she said, "I'm sure it's okay." Despite the lingering light and the pleasant but considerable noise of conversations and guitars from adjacent campfires we each fell into a deep and instantaneous sleep.

Some hours later, I woke with a jerk at the loud thump of a car door. Then a bright flashlight beam slashed through our tent several times. This was very startling: Campers are usually extremely considerate people—quiet late at night and careful to keep their flashlights down, since nearly all modern tents are translucent. I sat up and looked out the window mesh. It must have been near midnight, or even later, because there was not a light in the camp, not even from the truck campers and trailers at the far end—except, that is, for the flashlight in the hand of the person scrounging around in the back of our car.

Without thinking about it at all, I quietly unzipped the tent. Then, in my flannel pyjama bottoms and a t-shirt, I ran barefoot across the ground under the trees to the car, very, very quietly. As a teenager I spent some time running lightless around the forests of the Olympic Peninsula eating native onions and lily bulbs, and hunting down various artists and poets who were squatting in abandoned cabins. I was following Bill, a very nice boyfriend who went on to become an ethnobotanist and who insisted that our eyes could see as well as an owl's though they took longer to adjust. I have never used flashlights in the woods since, and I didn't use one now.

When I arrived at the car, the person's head was still down, and with the car door between us I said, not loudly but with great intensity, "WHAT are you DOING?"

A small, slight, thirty-ish woman, with her own striking aura of very frizzy blond hair lit by her strong flashlight, jerked upright, shrieking, and then screamed out, "I don't know!"

Something in her reaction led me to reach out a hand and place it on her arm, very gently. Even so, I said quickly again, "What are you DOING in our car?"

Then, with my hand still on her arm, in a lovely soft southern accent, she said, "But I'm not IN *your* car, darlin'".

I instantly believed her. Horrified and increasingly confused, I asked, in a tone which suggested, I think, that she'd spitefully hidden it somewhere out of sight just to confuse me, "Well, where's *my* car then?"

"I don't *know*, darlin'," she said, and then began, with what was, under the circumstances, unreasonable kindness, using her quite sensible flashlight to try to find my car for me.

"Oh, *there* it is," I said, a short second later. The woman and I were both standing in a vacant parking slot by her car, and in the next slot beyond that one, perhaps ten feet away, was Luci's Outback, right where we'd put it.

"Oh my gosh!" I said. I absolutely and literally *never* swore until I was in my thirties, and had to work hard to learn how. But it has never become second nature to me; I still revert to the old non-

swearing behaviour whenever I stub my toe or am otherwise shocked. “Oh MY GOSH!!” I repeated, “I’m SO sorry. I must have scared the living daylights out of you!”

“Yes you *did*, darlin’,” she said.

“Oh, I am SO, SO sorry.” She just looked at me.

I didn’t know what else to do. “I think I’d better go back to bed.”

“Yes,” she said, and paused. Then, when I was a few steps away, she softly drawled to my retreating back, “You have a good night, now.”

I went back to the tent, lay on my face in my sleeping bag, and physically twitched with embarrassment—it was more like convulsions actually—for at least an hour, replaying the entire scene over and over in my head, trying to make some sense of the whole set of events. How had I gotten it so wrong in the first place, given that an underlying source of anxiety had been the stupid bear-proof box, directly in the line to our car? Why hadn’t I noticed when I DIDN’T run into it as I flitted across the forest floor?

Between twitches, I soon began to wonder what would have happened had this really been someone burgling my car. Had I grabbed that sort of person’s arm, they most likely would not have called me “darlin’” and wished me a “good night.” So a *much* more sensible approach would have been to shine a *flashlight* at them, and to make some *noise*. I could even have awakened Luci.

Yet I hadn’t really decided to do what I did, in any usual sense of decision such as considering whether I should or shouldn’t surprise a burglar in the act, and then choosing one way or the other. Which made me wonder: Did I make like some sort of cross between a pyjama-clad superhero and a silent forest fairy as a result of my admittedly strange childhood, or was I just *born* stupid?

Alongside these sorts of considerations ran another stream of thought. It seemed to me that, unlike intelligence, empathy had poked its head up in numerous ways. For one thing, even the line of reasoning about how a burglar might react was a form of prospective empathy. Further, my almost immediate horror at what I had done was entirely focussed upon a very rapid computation (in a visual re-running in my mind of the first few moments, but from the aura-woman’s perspective) of how frightening this event must have been: I’m rummaging in my car. It’s very late, and I’m tired, and suddenly an in-

tensely angry voice says, "*What are you doing?*" I jerk upright and scream, only to confront said woman, who is quite a bit bigger than I am, and now has her hand on my arm.

Granted, my hand on her arm was not a threatening one, resting there lightly, because I had already intuitively registered in her shriek a lack of threat and even the strong sense of her innocence. Still, her terror was real.

On the other hand, I was at a loss with respect to the remainder of her interaction with me. I felt profoundly puzzled by her gentleness and her lack of anger in the situation. I could only speculate that I would have reacted quite differently—in fact I couldn't reconstruct the scene in any way which included reacting as she had. I was very grateful for her lack of intensity, but I just couldn't empathize with her state and behaviour; it felt incomprehensible, indeed, even wrong in some way. Perhaps, I thought, she was treating me the way you treat a crazy person, humouring me, but that didn't seem quite correct.

I can't know, of course, but after I saw her the next morning, and apologized abjectly yet again, she and her partner began to pack up their camp. He was a glowering figure, grumbling at her continuously, and in the light of day she seemed oddly un-reactive to his barbs and nastiness, a somewhat beaten down and weakened person. In this light, literal and spiritual, I felt even worse about my behaviour the night before, guessing that its cost must have been worse for someone like her. Again I was empathising—assessing in some way what this might be like for me, were I in her shoes.

The next morning I told Luci, who had slept through the whole thing, what had happened. I was laughing as I blushed, but I was also genuinely upset at having frightened an innocent person so badly. She, on the other hand, just laughed uproariously. I wanted her to laugh, but I also wanted her to see how upset I really was—but somehow the way I told her about it, the fact of pleading to her humour first, meant that she couldn't really hear the other aspects, she couldn't in fact empathize with that less-humorous part of my experience. For each of the next three nights, as we were going to bed, she would say, "Now I want you to promise not to assault anyone tonight—okay?" And I would flash her my middle finger, having returned to my well-learned state of contentiousness.

Introduction to Empathy

Empathy's short history as a term can be traced by quoting both its first uses, and a much more recent one. Robert Vischer, in the doctoral thesis which introduced *Einfühlung* (empathy's precursor), describes first our reactions to a farmer whose crop is at risk, and then the sculpture of a soldier who has been injured in a battle:

And yet as long as the farmer supposes that he alone is affected, the difference between his feeling and his sensation can only be one of degree Only by considering our fellow beings do we ascend to a true emotional life. This natural love for my species is the only thing that makes it possible for me to project myself mentally; with it, I feel not only myself but at the same time the feeling of another being. (Vischer 1873/1993, 103)

... the purity of all human existence appears sullied by this one image of suffering. The barbarity of enmity, the powerlessness of the individual, the whole sense of designation—breathing his last amid the overwhelming tumult of life—all this is written on the soldier's face, and the whole of humanity must, so to speak, repeat it and relive it. (Vischer 1873/1993, 110)

Tania Singer et al describe a scientific study in which lovers watched each other as a burning shock was applied to one or the other's arm:

Our data suggest that empathizing with the pain of others does not involve the activation of the whole pain matrix, but is based on activation of those second-order representations containing the subjective affective dimension of pain. (2004, 1161)

In other words, the study showed that the brains of those beholding their lovers in pain looked, on brain scans, very like the brains of those receiving the pain. Their brains *mirrored* the pain of the other, with the exception that the beholder did not in fact feel the direct physical sensation of pain.

From its beginnings in Vischer's German aesthetics to its discussion in technical scientific journals, empathy as a concept has represented an attempt to describe an aspect of human intercommunication in which a person beholding another feels as if they are mirroring some aspect of the other's experience.

In doing so, empathy straddles a number of customary divides. In certain of its aspects, it is intuitive and unwilling, and places itself within the realm of science. In other aspects, it entails choosing to place ourselves "in another's shoes," and, as chosen, thereby enters the realms more commonly allocated to ethics and religion. It also addresses itself to the affective, emotional aspects of life, while at times also demanding of us careful thought, even logical reasoning as we seek to determine which of its manifestations can be treated as genuinely offering us insights into another person's experience.

Empathy as a concept is invoked in literature, cinema, anthropology and hard-core neuroscience, in discussions about all the issues that matter most: love, life, death, art. The multidisciplinary nature of theorizing around empathy has resolved itself with respect to this dissertation in a functional community which is an artefact of University regulations. For students in the Independent Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program, their committee, once constituted, assumes the duties and rights of a department. My committee has become the department of empathy, and I have made my study the discipline of empathy.

The dissertation as a whole asserts that empathy forms a useful category under which a wide and seemingly disparate set of human behaviours may be seen as functionally and conceptually related. More specifically, empathy, once engaged, acts as a knife edge, playing an essential role in belief and disbelief and the decisions that arise from these states. The dissertation which results in exploring this discipline from within this departmental entity covers a diverse and fractured terrain. I strongly prefer not to over-determine the end destination of the readers of this dissertation, so I am inclined to provide you not with a road map with its fixed routes, but a rough topography, including the dashed lines of possible trails.

A Rough Topography

PRELIMINARY MATERIALS:

This first section of the thesis begins by describing a series of philosophical challenges posed by the interdisciplinary nature of this dissertation. I enjoin readers to maintain a level of vigilance appropriate to my level of expertise in these various disciplines, and I discuss the difficulties inherent in finding a “voice” within which to write about those diverse theoretical fields. In a second major section, I trace the history of the term empathy, and end by defining empathy, first over against sympathy and then by means of common metaphors. I contend for a version of empathy as a fundamental human capacity that can be deployed in many ways both pro- and anti-social.

Following this introductory section, I undertake a series of three Case Studies, which can be seen as problem-solving exercises. The problems under attempted solution vary from Case to Case. Empathy links all of the Case Studies; how can it be described, how can it be evoked or denied, what are the moral

or ethical implications of choices around empathy. In each Case Study, I bring together readings related to empathy, readings without any overt connection to that term from conventionally academic and theoretical realms, and texts whose target audience is more popular.

This dissertation is a performance and each case requires that I find not just texts relevant to the identified topic, but a voice (as conceived in creative writing)—a style, vocabulary, rhythm—appropriate to an identified audience. Each Case Study has been approached as an essay, with a beginning, middle, and end—a premise, development, and conclusions. This imposes added stylistic demands upon the Case Studies which have been variously met.

CASE STUDY I: FOUR POEMS

Case Study I asks what scientific texts can tell us about a series of four poems and their related experiences, and then what the poems and their related experiences can reveal about the scientific texts. This case study centers on four poems I wrote following experiences in four sets of relationships of varying degrees of intimacy. Each of the first four chapters describes one of these experiences in a documentary mode, a sort of personal journalism, and includes the poem which results. The first poem provides an opportunity to examine the history and definitions of empathy which arise initially from the German aesthetics of Robert Vischer, via Theodor Lipps and Edward Titchener, and then find expression in the cognitive and social sciences. Findings from current cognitive sciences are brought to bear upon the remaining three poems, expressed in a form of discourse and explication quite similar to that of the scientific works themselves.

I point out that speaking in the more usual language in which I both live and process events in my life, my honest attempt to represent what has happened as truthfully as I can, though necessarily limited by the location of that experience within the confines of my one body, nonetheless deeply serves an “empathic chain.” As I allow an experience, or experiences, to emerge with as much fidelity as possible, I don’t thereby perfectly reflect someone else’s experience but rather try to make my own analogical experience available to yet more readers or hearers.

In their theoretical orientation, these chapters focus upon science and deterministic explanation. Nonetheless, there are ethical dilemmas entailed in the production and sharing of these works, dilemmas attached to decisions about how much to write, how much to tell, and how the people in question will react. The more theorised literary approaches illuminate, and indeed help provide a language for, a number of those lived ethical dilemmas which arise from the poems, raising questions specifically to do with the concepts of honesty, truthfulness, and fidelity in the representation of experience.

The relevant aspects of non-fiction as explored here apply to every genre cited in this dissertation, including the personal journalism, scientific writing, emails, and poems in this first case study. Later chapters add ethnography, popular anthropology and science, and personal essay. Thus this first case study allows me to lay out and to exemplify certain central forms and concerns to which all the remaining chapters make reference.

CASE STUDY II: ON FREEZING GENTLY

The second case study addresses "Frozen in Time," a *National Geographic* article by the explorer Johan Reinhard, about the discovery of an Incan child sacrifice site. This case study examines this article through a number of theoretical lenses, especially from visual critical theory and ethnography, questioning the ways in which both visual and textual strategies seek to selectively engage and disengage the reader's empathy toward Reinhard and toward the dead children.

The case study then turns its attention to a specific subset of ethnographic theory, namely those works which seek to define religious sacrifice, and explores the ways in which these definitions both construct and reflect a vision of such sacrifice which largely rules out the writer's identification with the term, and by implication the reader's identification with the term as well. In other words, the end result of these definitions, if adhered to, is a conceptual distancing of all of our own behaviours and motivations from the behaviours and motivations as labelled.

This distancing has significant ethical implications, so this Case Study ends with an altered, more inclusive definition of sacrifice which encompasses both the Incan children, and those who were the subjects of military mind-control experiments in the middle decades of the 1900's. This new definition leads

to suggestions for an altered article—one that would encourage empathy with both the murdered children and their murderers, toward a goal of opening significant ethical introspection, both personal and cultural.

CASE STUDY III: ROLE DRAMA

Case Study III is the most experimental of the three—it falls into no particularly recognizable genre, academic or otherwise. It tells in narrative form a story of a particular phase in the development of this dissertation. I treat first a role drama, and then in succession a Hebrew word, narratives of my own non-traumatic experience, writings on trauma by scientists (such as Daniel Schacter and Basil van der Kolk), and certain metaphors (such as Schrodinger's cat) as analogies for trauma. My goal in these analogies is somehow to illuminate at depth the experience of severe trauma, and along the way to establish an empathic connection for the reader with the experience of such trauma, leading to the possibilities of empathy, affective and ethical engagement, and openness to action. The problem posed by the Case Study is whether and how words can be deployed in the description of severe trauma and its aftermaths.

A Coda to Case Study III claims that, while successful in many ways, these analogies also in some ways fail. The ways they fail point to the role empathy plays in the inexpressibility of trauma. Rogers' *as if* condition, first mentioned in the Preliminary Materials, while not an answer to these difficulties, provides a way forward for writers willing to engage empathically with the trauma of others.

ESSAY: HEARTS AND TONGUES

For the final essay in this dissertation, I freed myself to address topics which had risen within my studies with a completely different audience in mind. I have written the essay fully intending to attempt publication in a literary journal or magazine as creative non-fiction. The audience is, in general, the sort of person who reads those magazines, more narrowly, my thesis committee, and in particular the member of my committee who taught creative writing at my university for decades.

Why a Story?

But why start this introduction with a personal story, rather than with the paragraph just above? Because I want to begin as I mean to continue. Each case study centres on some aspect of my personal experience.

This use of the personal signals not that I've somehow conveyed the details of context in their totality but rather that certain contextual aspects seem the most essential to me. More important, however, is the way these stories signal the broader fact of context and open it to view, asserting its importance even though, or perhaps because, context is never capable of full explication.

This approach seems especially important in a dissertation that accesses multiple scientific texts whose roughly equal glories and dangers often arise precisely from the curtailment of the personal. The limitation of view in scientific texts allows a particularly focussed attention to certain minutiae of human experience, and thereby yields genuine and sometimes shockingly powerful insights. However, science writing, even at the level of highly technical journals, tends to take these insights and broaden their application. Popular scientific writing often moves even further from research-based insight in its applications.

I am not opposed in the slightest to these processes of wider interpretation. However, the scientists involved, especially in the popular writing, often fail to make explicit the move from the narrow claims that can be supported (within their acknowledged conceptual framework) to a broader realm of application where they not only *have* not, but often simply *can* not, structure experiments of a size and complexity that would justify their claims. Thus, my insistence on the personal is, among other things, my way of asserting the contingent and personal nature of all writing, including scientific writing, and including my own writing about science in this dissertation—an insistence that science is *a* language, not *the* language, for the description of human experience, and that the use of even this language is tinged with and tilted by the personal.

Another aspect of the story above: As I convulsed in my tent I was already consciously processing my experience in terms of my academic fixation with empathy. As a Ph.D. student, with empathy as my area of study, I was finding empathy absolutely everywhere. This highly iterative engagement demonstrates the way in which my academic pursuits shaped, if not the immediacy of my sleep-besotted paranoia, at least the processing shortly thereafter. And even as that processing occurred I was thinking about the processing itself and its implications for my research. The story helps demonstrate the impossibility of teasing one's academic pursuits away from one's current personal experience, and vice versa. A num-

ber of the stories around which this dissertation revolves describe experiences incurred during the research and writing of the dissertation, again, not just because they are apt in terms of context, but because that inclusion signals, though by no means exhaustively, the various inextricabilities of the typically personal with the typically academic.

The impact of past experience is invoked in the camping story via the mention of that past. An out-of-the-ordinary childhood, which included being raised in a cult, constantly casts me into doubt about the sources of my behaviours. These interconnected strands, of empathy, belief, and behaviour in many kinds of non-fiction writing, form a nexus in the web of this particular dissertation. Further, the form of this story, with its explicit mention of a relatively benign past, and the veiled mention of my stranger and less accessible past, reflects an intense interest in the strategies of revelation and concealment with respect to that special nexus of concern.

Other less obvious but crucial aspects of my dissertation-writing process also receive a nod in this story. My academic and personal lives are not hermetically sealed from one another, but one and the same life with aspects or foci which could be described as “academic,” “personal.” My life, for a variety of reasons, contains a number of writers of various types, and two of my most intimate friends are poets, Luci, mentioned above, and Katherine, mentioned below. I edit all of Luci’s poetry, and often edit Katherine’s. In turn, each of them edits almost everything I write, not just the conventionally creative work, such as the essay which concludes this dissertation, but most of my conventionally academic work as well. They’ve therefore had a very direct hand in the forming of this work, which not only references my relational experience of the two of them, but has been in part constructed through their direct criticism.

This inter-connectedness, intricate and intimate, points to the way in which my work on this dissertation is nested within relationships personal and professional, and some of which function in both realms. My family, my dissertation committee, my friends, a host of others, are a chronic, I would guess constant, factor in the very conceiving of the words which wind up on this page. I write—in a state sometimes conscious and foregrounded, sometimes not—with an audience in mind, and am in an empathic affective conversation with that audience. Aspects of this empathic connection are discussed below, but the

entirety of the process is both ultimately too complex and poorly understood, by anyone, to be encompassed in words, let alone in this dissertation. Certainly, one general impact is the sense I carry that the standards for this dissertation are shaped by not just an academic audience, but one which bears a quite different orientation toward words, even in this context, an orientation which is more conventionally creative, which values, for example, surprise, sound, the long shape of the sentence and the paragraph, the apt word. These values are not absent in some of the academic texts I have read, but they are not, as far as I can tell, predominant in that realm.

The dissertation will often look very like this introduction, with one or a few core texts explicated in detail. This approach is variously motivated. I am convinced I have read as much or more than most would to write a similar-sized dissertation. However, I have read widely, and in no single field have I read anything like as much as the average Ph.D. student might. It is simply impossible to both accomplish my project and read at that depth within a specific area. A temptation arises, therefore to stay broad, to summarize, to explicate points where consensus is the norm across a wide variety of readings.

I am, however, a writer who shapes individual texts, and loves to seek the shape in others' texts. They present the thinking of the writer at a particular time, with words linked as she intended them, whether that intention was entirely rational and cognitive or not. So in an act of thoroughly irrational empathy, I feel for these authors a desire to honour their texts somehow as constructed wholes. While this choice entails some necessary repetition, it gives me the room to at least attempt to trace the shape of their thoughts. Further, while I must read broadly, I prefer many aspects of engagement with specific texts. Describing a few texts in detail gives focus to a work of this disciplinary scope. Particular texts also provide templates of interest to which other readings may be brought, thereby opening out into the general questions—a rather Idealist approach—save, as I describe in some detail below, that I believe the artist's immediate job is to represent the particular. Finally, I begin with a creatively written story because I intend to incorporate stories into each of the Case Studies and to end the thesis as a whole with a creatively structured narrative.

GLOSSARY

Terms and names require some managing in an interdisciplinary work accessing texts from the sciences, the humanities, and the arts. I could direct you to a glossary placed in the usual location near the end of the dissertation. My suggestion, instead, is that you peruse this list to familiarize yourself with at least who and what I mention, as a means of avoiding frustration after this point for you, and un-necessary clarifying comments for me.

This glossary does not provide exhaustive definitions for the terms contained, but rather clarifying notes where terms might be unfamiliar to most readers or where some aspect of their use in this dissertation differs from common usage for most readers. Just as certain terms are so well known within their given fields as to need no further definition, so too certain names, while not so well known in common language as an Einstein, are “household names” within their own fields. These are mentioned below. Where the context makes it clear that everyone mentioned must necessarily be working within a given genre such as experimental psychological linguistics, I do not include them here.

agency: A quality of self-determination or *choice*. Often used in political discourses to discuss powers and freedoms which can be acquired or lost, given or taken away. See *choice*.

choice: At the ontological level, the idea that free will in some form exists. See *agency*.

coda: A few measures or a section added to the end of a piece of music to make a more effective ending (Public Schools of North Carolina 2006). (Italian for "tail"; from the Latin *cauda*, see below), in music, is a passage which brings a movement or a separate piece to a conclusion through prolongation In a series of variations on a theme or in a composition with a fixed order of subjects, the coda is a passage sufficiently contrasted with the conclusions of the separate variations or subjects, added to form a complete conclusion to the whole (Wikipedia 2006).

I have used the Wikipedia for several reasons: 1) In this open access internet based encyclopaedia, definitions tend to evolve toward clear direct formulations which do not depend upon discipline-specific usages. 2) Open access could lead to inaccurate or malicious entries. Where this occurs, for example with descriptions of certain individuals and topics, descriptions are locked to prevent tampering. For example, empathy itself has large sections which are locked. 3) Perhaps most importantly, I have used nothing from any source which does not accord with my understanding of the terms and persons described. The Wikipedia provided a way of discovering, in keeping with themes invoked in much of this dissertation, common language formulations.

conscious, subconscious, unconscious: Conscious can be used in a general sense as the opposite of being asleep or in a coma. In this dissertation, primarily used in the sense in which a state of being conscious, or consciousness, is “A domain of mind that contains the sensations, perceptions and memories of which one is momentarily aware; that is those aspects of present mental life that one is attending to” (Reber 1995: "consciousness"), and including the memories of those aspects of mental life. While unconscious in common usage may mean in a coma or asleep, here it primarily “characteriz[es] those internal

processes that proceed in an implicit manner outside of consciousness" (Reber 1995: "unconscious"). Subconscious as an adjective refers to a liminal group of experiences, which can usually be described either as: "information that is not part of one's momentary awareness but which can, given the proper circumstances, be made conscious", or "information or stimuli that are at the margins of attention, events that one is only vaguely aware of" (Reber 1995, "subconscious").

CT (or CAT) scan: Computed Axial Tomographic scan. Two-dimensional x-ray "slices" of the body are processed by computer software into three-dimensional images. See *fMRI*, *PET scan*.

culture: As Raymond Williams points out, a most complicated word in modern usage. I use it entirely as "the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, or a group" (Williams 1976, 80) This word provides a shorthand for the idea that any given humans can be born, grow, live, and die within contexts providing experiences of either greater or lesser similarity, and that relative proximity in time or geography is likely to affect that degree of similarity.

dissociation: Used primarily in the sense that awarenesses or memories which would, under normal circumstances be available to consciousness, are not, usually due to distress or trauma of some kind.

emotion: See *sensation*.

feeling: See *sensation*.

fMRI: Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging. Uses a combination of magnetic alignment and radio waves to assess changes in the proportions of oxygenated and deoxygenated (used) haemoglobin, which are related to increased demand for oxygen in active cells. The readings are computed by software into three dimensional images. Better resolution than PET scans, and unlike both PET scans and CT scans, does not expose subject to any radiation. The precise relationships between scan results and brain activity are still being researched. See *PET scan*, *CT scan*.

Geertz, Clifford: A highly influential anthropologist. "He has... contributed to social and cultural theory and is still very influential in turning anthropology toward a concern with the frames of meaning within which various peoples live out their lives" (Wikipedia 2006).

Girard, René: "A French philosopher, historian and philologist. He prefers to call himself an anthropologist in the vein of philosophical anthropology. He is the author of multiple books developing the idea that human culture is based on a sacrifice as the way out of mimetic, or imitative, violence between rivals. In the scientific field, he is known for his theory of 'mimetic desire'" (Wikipedia 2006).

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle: AKA the indeterminacy principle. "An inherent principle of quantum mechanics which states that at the microscopic level, it is impossible to know both the momentum p and the position x of a particle with absolute precision The principle is a consequence of the fact that any attempt at measurement must disturb the system under investigation, with a resulting lack of precision. The determination of both energy and time is also subject to the same uncertainty One consequence of the uncertainty principle is that the macroscopic principle of causality cannot apply at the atomic level" (*Dictionary of Theories*). See *quantum mechanics*.

Idealism: Not in the casual sense of a focus upon perfection, but rather a philosophy which states, on the mild epistemological end, that all perception is necessarily affected by the mind, and on the extreme ontological end that there is nothing but what is created by the mind.

interest: In older texts, entails a personal investment in the outcome of the engagement under question.

Lacan, Jacques: Claimed that he was primarily, or even exclusively, and interpreter of Freud, though his work goes well beyond Freud's in many ways. His most oft-quoted concepts revolve around the idea that human consciousness is structured by language, or sometimes, like a language. He has been highly influential in literary, cultural and critical theory.

mechanist: Believes that all mental phenomena can be explained physically. As contrasted to *mental*ist.

mentalist: Believes that not all mental phenomena can be explained physically. As contrasted to *mech*-*an*ist.

moral, ethical: In general, when treated as different, moral addresses the purely personal (as if there could be such a thing), while ethical discusses acts which impact others. Vetlesen uses moral for both.

naïve: Used primarily as "deficient in worldly wisdom or informed judgment; *especially:* credulous" (Online 2005). However, another meaning often applied to art suggests rather that the material presented, verbal or visual, is un-affected or even uncorrupted by academic or critical thought. This latter meaning is closer to my own usage in this context.

necessary and sufficient: Used in definitions. "A condition *A* is said to be *necessary* for a condition *B*, if (and only if) the falsity (/nonexistence /non-occurrence) [as the case may be] of *A* guarantees (or brings about) the falsity (/nonexistence /non-occurrence) of *B*. A condition *A* is said to be *sufficient* for a condition *B*, if (and only if) the truth (/existence /occurrence) [as the case may be] of *A* guarantees (or brings about) the truth (/existence /occurrence) of *B*" (Schwartz 1997).

objective: For Vischer and Lipps, objective and subjective are usually simply adjectives indicating whether the entity under question is related to the subject (a human taking an action such as observing), or the object (such as a painting or sculpture being observed). So introspection and dreams are subjective, occurring in and with reference to the subject, but can contribute to legitimate scientific exploration. Objective means related to the object outside of the subject, and in this context, under contemplation by the subject.

PET scan: Positron Emission Tomography scan. Subjects are injected with radioactive glucose. Glucose is metabolized by active cells, including those in the brain, so the most active parts of the brain show up on the scan. Like *fMRI scans* in being a "functional" scan. See *CT scan*, *fMRI scan*.

quantum mechanics: "The well-tested theory of the behaviour of matter on the microscopic scales of atoms and computer chips, where the constituents of matter behave simultaneously like waves and particles" (NASA 2005). Classical mechanics failed to provide a predictive physics for matter at the sub-atomic scale; the various predictions under this theory have succeeded well, but seem to actively contradict certain aspects of classical mechanics. *String theory* is an attempt to provide a consistent theory which accommodates both quantum and classical mechanics. See *Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle*.

printing terms: Technical terms common to discussions of printing and periodicals will be used. "Body" text refers to the main continuous "essay" text of an article, and excludes titles, captions or legends for this text. This is a particularly useful distinction here, since captions in *National Geographic* can run several paragraphs. "Titles," "captions," and "legends" have overlapping, nearly interchangeable, technical meanings. For this paper, "title" will refer only to the primary short headings, always in larger type, attached to periodicals, articles, and sections of books or articles, blocks of text, and even, in *National Geo-*

graphic to longer captions. “Caption” will be used for all explanatory text primarily attached to photographs. A “spread” is a composed image of one or more artefacts.

Rogers, Carl: At one time a household word for his work in popularizing the concept of empathy. He was also a very fine scientist, over the years conducting, and through his students supervising, dozens of creative, well-structured experiments into the nature and functions of empathy.

Schacter, Daniel: “Schacter’s research has focused on psychological and biological aspects of human memory and amnesia, with a particular emphasis on the distinction between conscious and nonconscious forms of memory and, more recently, on brain mechanisms of memory distortion” (Schacter 2006).

sensation: For Vischer and Lipps is “simply the body’s physical responses to outside stimuli,” while *emotion* is also a sort of inherent faculty, somewhat like physical sensation, but not localized. *Feeling* (of which *Einfühlung* is a species) “assumes mental or emotional activity” and suggests a greater level of processing (Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994). However, these terms as categories include manifestations we might label quite differently. For example, *feelings* can include force and power, while *emotion* encompasses goodness and excellence (Vischer 1873/1993, 121).

sensational: Sensational here is not equivalent to “fabulous” but rather marks out a view that all thought, including words, originate in physical sensations. We are here once again engaged in an old, and now, at least in experimental psychology, concluded, argument—this one against those who believed in the existence of some form of pure thought.

string theory: “A theory that what we perceive as particles are actually vibrations on strings or membranes in a 10- or 11-dimensional space, respectively. These theories resolve the incompatibility between general relativity and quantum mechanics and unify them” (NASA 2005). See *quantum mechanics*, *Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle*.

subconscious: see *conscious*.

subjective: See *objective*.

sufficient: in definitions, see *necessary and sufficient*.

theory of mind: “Understanding others’ intentions is an important ability that involves representing the mental states of others in one’s own mind (forming a ‘theory of mind’). There are two competing views of how we do so. ‘Simulation theory’ suggests that we directly simulate others’ cognitive processes by deploying the same cognitive mechanisms, whereas ‘theory theory’ suggests that we use inferential and deductive processes that do not involve simulation” (Ramnani and Miall 2004, 85).

titration: In chemistry, the successive measured dilutions of a chemical in order to gauge its effects.

unconscious: see *conscious*.

van der Kolk, Bessel, M.D.: “Medical Director [Justice Research Institute Trauma Center], has been active as a clinician, researcher and teacher in the area of posttraumatic stress and related phenomena since the 1970s. His work integrates developmental, biological, psychodynamic and interpersonal aspects of the impact of trauma and its treatment” (Institute 2006).

Williams, Raymond: “Highly influential Welsh academic, novelist and critic” (Wikipedia 2006). Particularly influential in literary and cultural theory and criticism.

PRELIMINARY MATERIALS

Issues & Presuppositions

Writers of dissertations who choose to interact primarily or entirely with material within a particular discipline have the luxury of avoiding at least some part of what I must now do. My dissertation addresses materials from many disciplines. Each of these disciplines has certain underlying assumptions which need not be queried, defended, or even described in the ordinary run of academic discourse. For example, whatever they may do in private, most scientists, when they sit down to write, assume—rather than question or defend—a belief in at least the statistical consistency of reality in its behaviours. Contemporary literary theorists likewise often refer to a certain level of suspicion about language, without defending or even describing their beliefs in those areas.

These assumptions, however well thought out, are in the end assumptions, and in the case of my own, I intend more to reveal than to justify them. In the interests of a sort of journalistic revelation of bias and even more in the interest of forestalling unnecessary digressions each time I shift disciplines, in this section to I display what seem to me to be the most important of my own assumptions relative to the matters at hand.

*Boswell wrote of Johnson: "After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, 'I refute it thus'" (Boswell and Hill 1887, 471; Fels 1999). Similarly, "The satirist Jonathan Swift, who was a friend of Berkeley's showed typical incomprehension by instructing his servants not to open the door to Berkeley when he visited, on the grounds that Berkeley believed he could walk through doors." (Stoneham 2002, 31)

I am, with slight emendations, basically Berkeleyan in my approach to reality. I believe in a reality not dependent upon human perception for its continued existence. I refuse to be a Johnsonian "I refute him thus" rock kicker, or for that matter, a Swiftian door closer, for at least two

reasons*. Firstly, Samuel Johnson's painful effort only demonstrated a profound misunderstanding of Bishop Berkeley's position. As Stoneham summarizes Berkeley's fundamental approach,

(1) ... Berkeley believed in the existence of a physical world distinct from the minds that perceive it but dependent for its existence upon being perceived, and (2) ... Berkeley sharply distinguished perceptual knowledge, which is of particulars and unmediated by concepts and is thus peculiarly human and fallible. (Stoneham 2002, 33)

Berkeley was addressing a number of problems, including the variability and fallibility of individual perception and the persistence of objects even when unperceived, by making reality dependent on the eternal perception of God. The location of reality within the perception of God does not thereby entail an absence of solidity. Rather, Berkeley sought thus a guarantee for the solid and continuing reality of this world. It is perhaps worth mentioning that a number of grand minds, including the physicist Albert Einstein, who died in the last century, and the philosopher Anthony Flew, who died in this, have in the end inclined toward the belief that something exists beyond the empirically sensible which in some way underlies or guarantees the trustworthiness or dependability of our physical reality. Either way of approaching these problems generates its own set of questions and solutions. Without claiming this preference as the reason for my inclinations, I can say that I prefer both the solutions and the questions which attend to the belief in some *meta*-physical or *intra*-physical or *deeper-than*-physical fact, and in general, my lesser mind inclines in this direction.

The stubbed toe incurred in an attempt to prove “reality” also fails to impress me on a second somewhat paradoxical count: At the quantum level, matter not only looks less than solid, it is under current constructions seeming downright queer, when at least one appropriate description would be that an electron “decides” both its state and position only when observed, or, to remain Berkeleyan, perceived. Similarly at the mega-physical level explored by cosmological physicists, black holes and large quantities of dark matter pose substantial challenges to an everyday rock-kicking approach to reality. Even quantum physicists are generalizing and making predictions, and these processes of science by and large require dependability—at least in a statistical fashion—more than an exact idea of the deep nature of reality. Nonetheless, at the meso-physical level explored by the scientists I reference, neither quarks nor string theory play much of a role in the pain generated by rock-kicking, and ordinary Newtonian physics remains highly predictive.

An excellent example of the “common knowledge” problem: This assertion about the quantum model would be made without attribution not only in scientific journals, but even in popular scientific periodicals like *Discover*. A wonderful and accessible description of this problem which asks, “When did the electron decide which way it was going?” can be found at Watson (2001).

I also believe that the persistence of a reality separate from our perception ultimately underlies what meaning inheres in language. This sense of reality acts especially as the underlay for the truth

claims of any writing which describes itself as non-fiction. In common experience, the exchange, “Did it really happen that way? and “Yes, it did,” capture the sense implied. If a reader believes that I have attempted to write non-fiction, they don’t expect that I can fully encompass an experience or situation in mere text, but they do expect me not to lie to them. To put it another way, a section of language which claims to be non-fiction ultimately makes a claim which is science-like not in its verifiability but in its aspirations. The writer believes, and hopes the reader will believe, that even given the vagaries of memory and the limitations of language, were one able to replay the events in question they would at least not *falsify* the writing about those events. A more limited version of this claim, the one I would make, would be that the writer is trying to represent his or her own experience of events in such a way as to avoid falsification of experience or memory of experience. In practice, the slight difference between these two claims may be one of the usual differences between the genre of journalism, with its fact-checking, and in works of non-fiction creative writing such as the personal essays in this dissertation.

Scientists, too, prefer their results not to falsify their theses, though this is certainly a happy outcome. They write accounts of events, in this case the courses and outcomes of their research, and great scandals erupt when their accounts are falsified, in the sense above, by someone else’s account or by records kept about the research process. Scientists also go further to claim a statistical implication, namely that future events can be predicted as a result of these past events.

In one famous oft-repeated experiment, 50% of the participants routinely fail to notice when “someone dressed in a gorilla suit ambles across the floor... walks through [a group of basketball] players, turns to face the viewers, thumps his chest and leaves” (96). This sort of suppression of sensory input appears to serve at least two functions, the maintenance of coherence and the avoidance of sensory overload. (Ramachandran and Rogers-Ramachandran 2005)

All this reliance on an external reality makes me some sort of naïve realist. It could make me “an objectivist leaning towards epistemological/ontological realism” (Chandler 1997, 66) but my deep

suspensions around both perception and language bring me right to the edge of becoming, “a subjectivist leaning towards idealism—or at least a socially-inflected constructivist stance” (Chandler 1997, 66). For me, there is absolutely no such thing as an un-inflected pure perception of reality, nor, of course, of the memory of that perception. Not just the limits of our physiological perceptual and neurological processing equipment, but our need to construct coherence, the languages we first learn, the narratives we live

within, our immediate social and emotional contexts, and what we had for breakfast, all to varying extents govern even our immediate perceptual experience, let alone any further layers of processing.

With respect to language, I can grant that all of the above factors and more may influence the ways in which language functions within any individual at any particular time. I can grant a semiotician's view of language as an interconnected web of shifting meaning without thereby despairing of words' ultimate abilities to communicate meaning from being to being. This is true not least because for me, as for Berkeley, there is a something beyond the tangible, the word-able, which language nonetheless gestures toward, even or perhaps especially when it fails. Writers label this something variously; Jacques Lacan, for example, designates it "the Real."

<p>I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there's no way, to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it's through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real. (Lacan 1990, 3)</p>
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Agency, Choice, Determinism

My belief in a Berkeleyan persistence of a reality external to my perception, and in the statistical usefulness of science (when it restrains itself to topics properly limited by its methods), does not lead me to a fully deterministic world view. However, merely refusing to adopt one side of the dichotomy does not solve a fundamental question, namely that both involuntary emotional contagion and voluntary analogical empathy have been invoked from very early in discussions of empathy and its precursor, sympathy.

David Stewart expresses this dichotomy relative to empathy in his philosophical work, *Preface to Empathy*:

The *problem* posed by empathy is that it penetrates both sides of the dialectic of determinism and freedom. Determinism is the principle symbolizing the spirit, method and aim of the natural sciences Freedom symbolizes the spirit, method and aim of ethics and religion. And here we are faced with a problem within a problem. For freedom, contrasted with determinism, is *always* a problem in the area in which it has meaning. In science it is no problem except as a practical obstacle to increasing control But in ethics and religion—the problematic nature of freedom is essential to the enquiry. If it could be solved, there would be no ethics and no religion. For to solve it would be to eliminate it. (1956, 154)

Stewart points here to a foundational difference in disciplinary approaches to do with choice and therefore agency. As he quite properly notes, science's goal is to eliminate the question of choice. By definition science seeks to discover deterministic mechanisms, though at times these mechanisms may best be rep-

resented by a statistical likelihood (quantum mechanics) rather than fixed measurements within accepted tolerances. Science wants to know *how* things happen, in order to predict *what* will happen. On the other hand, ethics (and religion) assume at least some level of true choice. Thus, they are also interested in *how*, but might prefer to phrase it as *why*, and want to see the impact of those explorations upon choices.

Any failure to recognize this distinction generates significant confusion, even in criticisms of science and its reactions to questions of freedom and choice. Alfie Kohn indignantly relates this story:

I vividly recall attending a graduate school class in which the instructor drew a diagram on the blackboard to represent the balance of genetic and cultural determinants of behaviour. When a student asked about the omission of freedom—the realm of nondetermination—from this tidy model, the professor reacted rather as if someone had corrected his spelling and said he supposed that, yes, there was this, too. (1990, 19-20)

Kohn attributes this response to the instructor, “Not taking human freedom seriously” (20). Kohn here fails to distinguish between belief and practice. The instructor may well not believe in personal freedom, but he may, without thereby condemning his response in the class to incoherency. Last Sunday, after early Eucharist, my husband and I spoke to a friend, a decorated scientist—“Church in the morning, science in the afternoon—how about that!” he said brightly. “What do you mean?” I asked. “Oh, I’m on the Genome Committee. We have a meeting about ethics—you know it’s very complex, what’s coming up.” Clearly it is possible to wander around in one body, acting scientifically in the one realm, religiously in another, and making decisions at the committee level about ethics in another.

Kohn’s very mention of spelling is apt. The language the instructor was speaking has inherently to do with “determinants”; to require in that context that he speak of freedom is to ask him to pronounce something for which his classroom language has no phonemes, for which there are no symbols that could lead to a right spelling, a right pronunciation. The only option available within the language is a reductive analysis of choice on deterministic terms, what I call a scientizing of the topic.

I am completely uninterested in scientizing ethics, and I suppose I am declaring thereby that at some ontological level I believe in choice. Along with my friend Azim Shariff, who propounds a “good enough” theory of free will, I think choice-making may be very complex and holistic, not entirely conscious, and other than completely rational (Shariff, Schooler, and Vohs forthcoming). Choice, and there-

fore agency, may be at some level a fiction which serves some convenient evolutionary end. If so, the fiction is, by that definition, necessarily compelling, and it appears that I will live out this fiction by focussing a great deal on agency. On the other hand, there may be a fundamental reality to choice. Indeed, those who wish to access the languages of both choice and science often point to quantum indeterminacy in support of their position. I am neither a philosopher nor a quantum physicist, and will merely state that for me, there is enough mystery about this realm to allow at least an adequate state of agnosticism.

With respect to this dissertation, however, the fundamental difficulties noted by Stewart above have to some extent dictated the form of this work. The Case Studies below attempt to make space for conversations first, between, a body of literature which is broadly scientific and therefore by definition concerned with deterministic functions and focussed upon the unconscious and unwilled aspects of empathy, second, between a body of literature which is broadly literary-theoretical and therefore often concerned with agency and the conscious and willed aspects of empathy, and a *National Geographic* article, and third, between the descriptions of certain experiences and the descriptions of the mechanisms of trauma written by several scientists. As such, the first Case Study invokes material primarily on the deterministic side, the second material primarily addressed toward agency, and the third a mix of the two.

Similarity and Identity

The discursive realm opened by consideration of words such as identity and similarity has proven a constant nettling source of doubt for me as I've read in various disciplines. The deeper philosophical problems are thorny ones, and I am not here attempting to solve them. However, similarity and its corollary, accuracy, are critical to much thinking about empathy, so I want to mention a certain set of relevant questions that trouble me but go predominantly unasked within the given literatures this dissertation addresses.

The scientists I cite in Case Study I typically adopt a functional approach such that brains with highly similar features, and apparently similar functions, and which generate, for example, similar scan results, can be assumed to be performing similar tasks. Thus, discoveries about the brains of macaques can be interpreted as in some ways explanatory in respect to humans. These texts often seem cleaner and

clearer when compared to texts involving concepts such as analogy and empathic accuracy in the mimicry or mirroring of another's state. Where discussions access terminologies of feelings and emotions, an even greater fuzziness prevails, with more overlap and less defined edges amongst and between terms. But these latter conceptual realms are critical to the common-language understandings of empathy, and to my ongoing experience of empathy as well. Even in Case Study I, therefore, I conclude with a discussion of the implications of the studies examined upon questions of choice.

Case Studies II and III invoke the questions of identity more overtly, and in quite different ways. Case Study II must in part address the issues of similarity and difference when asserting that theories of empathy have something to say about choices made by long-dead people separated from us by time, space, and living conditions. In turn, the analogical nature of empathy in this context has a determining role in assessing the responsibilities and culpabilities of an author whose work selectively engages and disengages his readers' empathy. With respect to Case Study III, a reader's sense of similarity, even of identity, with respect to victims of trauma, can place them on the knife edge of belief and denial.

At the level of language, I lean towards common experience and usage. While I may acquire some pleasurable enlightenment from reading studies of mirror neurons in macaques, the fact that we're discussing monkeys limits any comfort I might gain in my own affairs. I depend on a sense of similarities in experience, pain, and horror for the very great comfort, or the resonating anger, or the sense of resolve, which may descend upon me when I read others' accounts of suffering.

Apprehensions of similarity and difference, in my opinion, depend at least in part upon the way our realities are constructed by our linguistics.

DIGRESSION: COLOR AND SPACE

Various studies conducted into concepts such as time (Boroditsky 2001), color (Ross 2004), and space (Majid et al. 2004) involved in our fundamental interactions with the everyday world support the assertion that even perceptions of similarity depend on labelling. The number of basic colours labelled in various languages (out of at least 110 languages studied so far) varies from two (Dani) to at least twelve (Rus-

sian). Yet the constraints on what sorts of colors, as measured by wavelength, get grouped together, are consistent, “suggesting the existence of universal constraints on semantic variation.”

The New Guinean language Dani has just two. One of the two encompasses black, green, blue and other “cool” colors; the other encompasses white, red, yellow and other “warm” colors. Those languages with only three terms almost always have “black-cool,” “white-light” and “red-yellow-warm.” Those having a fourth usually carve out “grue” [blue and green] from the “black-cool” term. (Ross 2004)

Industrialized societies consistently have a larger number of distinct colour terms relative to hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies (Ross 2004), suggesting a functional role for the varying number of colours.

For the last several years the “Space” project at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics has been exploring the impact upon cognition of different naming systems for space. As with colour, the number of spatial naming systems varies between languages. English speakers use two quite different forms of spatial descriptors. For small scale situations, they would say, “The fork is to the left of the plate,” or “the fork is beside the plate.” Only in large scale situations would they use an absolute frame of reference: “The road is north of the river.”

However, speakers of Guugu Yimithirr (Australia) use only the last kind of description: they do not have available either a Relative or an Intrinsic FoR [frame of reference]. The Absolute FoR is used even to describe the location of an object on a body part—a Guugu Yimithirr speaker would say, “There’s an ant on your south leg.” (Majid et al. 2004, 108-9)

Work with various languages, “suggests that linguistic diversity aligns with cognitive diversity, as shown in people’s language-independent solutions to spatial tasks and unselfconscious gestures accompanying speech.” These and other findings contribute “to the emerging view that language can play a central role in the restructuring of human cognition” (Majid et al. 2004, 113).



In the realm of affects and emotions, states describable by a single word in one language, require

The first translation for *simpatico* (Spanish) would not be sympathetic, but something closer to nice, or agreeable, but not quite so flaccid as these terms in English. I can remember women I met in Spain, described by other women as *simpatico*, and can sense a commonality between them, an active warmth, I would call it. While I would never in English use sympathetic after a first casual meeting with someone unless there had been some relevant content in the conversation by which I could judge, *simpatico* can be used after a very short first contact.

sentences of description in another. Metaphorical usages of body parts which have primarily affective import in one language (heart in English, for example), carry a quite different, more

structured, whole-person import with little sense of emotion in another (*levav* in Hebrew). Nevertheless, for the purposes of this dissertation, a common-language understanding of similarity will prevail, whereby if a person is feeling sad, and in response to their situation, I am feeling sad, then our emotions are similar.

This choice, however, does not solve the host of ontological problems around the nature of similarity and identity. Given that individuals can meaningfully be said to be not-identical even to themselves from moment to moment, the fundamental nature of identity and therefore similarity, if any, is extremely difficult to pin down. If someone who saw Richard Nixon at age 15 and then again at age 60 might not recognize him as the same person, in what does our understanding of “same person” consist (Perry 1975, 29)? When my brother had a very severe motorcycle accident and regressed (for some months) to the emotional status of a two-year-old, was he still my brother? How severe would the damage have to be for me to decide he was not? If, at the level of molecular description, our composition changes with every breath we take, in what sense are we identical to ourselves from moment to moment? In what sense, similar?

But should these questions concern us in our exploration of empathy? In exploring the question of whether people who have undergone brain bisection ought now to be viewed as one person or two, Thomas Nagel points out that much rests upon our determination in this case, in particular the rather empathically phrased “need to construe the mental states we ascribe to others on the model of our own” (1975, 242). The hypothesis that two minds are present, “at least has the advantage of enabling us to understand what it is like to *be* these individuals, so long as we do not try to imagine what it is like to be both of them at the same time” (1975, 240). Nagel’s suggestion is not only that “there is no whole number of individual minds that these patients can be said to have” (1975, 241), but that the “simple idea of the person” with its “whole number countability” is an illusion (1975, 242-3).

The epistemological problems are if anything even greater. For example, conscious knowledge and labelling of the relevant emotions by either party are not necessary to the concept of empathy. Thus Carl Rogers would view the tuneable accuracy of a therapist’s empathy as a tool precisely for “sensing

meanings of which [the client] is scarcely aware, but not trying to uncover feelings of which the person is totally unaware, since this would be too threatening" (1975, 4). Note that the limiting factor here is the client's capacity for threat, not the therapist's capacity for accuracy.

I cannot solve or even properly address these issues. However, precisely because most of the writers about empathy cited in this work use constructions dependent on concepts of similarity and accuracy without mentioning them directly, I want to point to the considerable discomfort I experience. Not just because I want to stay somewhat close to intuitive usage, but because I must, I will adopt an intuitive belief that there are such things as individuals who may be identified as distinct from one another and therefore compared, and that comparisons can yield results of greater or lesser similarity.

Reading Blind

Raymond Williams risked "an extension and variety of themes well beyond the limits of any kind of academic prudence" (Williams 1961, ix) in his discussion of tragedy. The sorts of dismissive comments Williams recognizes from academe in his discussion of tragedy, can suggest that only a conversation between experts has value, so given that, unlike Williams, I am expert in not one of the academic disciplines I cite, I will have moved not just beyond the limits of prudence, but well out of sight of those limits. There are a number of replies which can be made to this. Robert Vischer, for example, who originated the term now translated as empathy, is hardly an expert in anything by today's standards—but I need to converse with him. Scientists who are highly expert in the brain physiology related to empathy might be abysmally inept at applying empathy in their own lives, but I want them at the table. My expertise consists not of fluency in any one of these tongues, but in being somewhat competent in all of them. Further, there is no such thing as an expert in general everyday experience. Either everyone or no-one is, so the term "expert" is emptied of content by the very thought. At best, I might be expert at my own experience. Yet I want someone's everyday experience of empathy involved in the discussion, so it had better be mine.

I necessarily distort the relevant discourses and not only through my relative inexpertise in any given one of them. Even were words to retain stable meanings over time within their own languages (an impossibility), their placements within such different semiotic webs would lend diverse shadings, such that a given sentence must carry quite different meanings when located within different disciplines. I have developed an avidity for just this sense of confusion and nuance, seeking out what a given discipline has to say about empathy, then letting these utterances reveal something of the discipline. I certainly see my topic as important—what Ph.D. student doesn't?—but I can't help but wonder whether my best qualification for this work of mediation is not so much my sense of urgency about the topic, but rather my status as an *amateur*, a *lover* of these many tongues.

Just as with foreign languages, even when we have some sense of what various words may mean, we tend to read

[The social account] precludes neither cognitive- nor neurological-based accounts of theory of mind development, which are at other levels of functional explanation. (Symons 2004, 159)

those words through our own certainties—light-diffracting cataracts which shift our view—in a disciplinary chauvinism to which we are often completely blind. It may be obvious that terminologies such as those of reality, choice, and similarity, when adopted variably by different disciplines pose a challenge to the reader. A number of other related forms of blindness also complicate inter-disciplinary reading.

Robert Vischer and Theodor Lipps originated the scientific study of empathy. I will look at their works in more detail a little later. For now, I want to mention several instances which illustrate problems in interdisciplinary reading. Some academic conversations, just like some everyday ones, move forward, at least in part, with areas of agreement assumed or briefly noted, and areas of disagreement mentioned and explored in more detail. The impact of these arguments upon a text can be profound but nearly invisible to the reader unfamiliar with the disciplinary history. For example, in Lipps' seminal article on empathy (Lipps 1903/1979), sense-feelings are mentioned many times. Then, very late and after the primary argument of the piece seems to have closed, Lipps launches this call to arms upon us: "It is the duty of scientific aesthetics and necessary for its sound development, that it gradually recover from this disease of preoccupation with sense-feelings."

It's quite bracing, really, suddenly to discover that one has been in the midst of a battle, unsuspecting. The seemingly disproportionate amount of time spent denying the relevance of "sense-feelings" to empathy turns out to be not just an attempt at clarity about empathy per se, but a call to arms—a drive to move all of what we would now call the scientific psychology of aesthetics away from its focus on "feelings localized in the body... kinaesthetic sensations, motor disturbances, physical cravings such as hunger, and so forth" (Lipps 1903/1979, 378, note 3). The point here is not that in noting this I become clearer about "sense-feelings," but that only Lipps' fortuitously pugnacious language alerts me, albeit rather late, to the existence of this particular prior dispute. Any expert in psychological aesthetics would certainly have known from the first mention of sense feelings the nature of the prior conversation, and the ways in which Lipps was contradicting those who came before him. I am not an expert; there is no question that in many other situations I will miss the shaping influence of similarly important prior conversations.

We also are blinded by a tendency to read our certainties not just sideways onto other disciplines, but also backwards onto earlier texts. We have seen this already in the mis-readings of Berkeley noted above, which owe a great deal to the more-widespread current disbelief in a transcendent being in whose gaze all reality rests. Further, even those who do believe in some form of transcendence would not necessarily hold Berkeley's understanding. For Berkeley, this being is an absolute reality: *more* real, not less, than the material world around him. The absolute reality of this being, then, is loaned to material reality through this being's gaze, and material reality is the *realer* for it. A failure to grasp this view of God must lead to a fatal misinterpretation of Berkeley's stance, which de-realizes his worldview relative to, for example, the toe-stubbing stone. This failed interpretation, which looks like that of the religious believer, Samuel Johnson, is actually engendered by an opposite understanding relative to God, and may account for Jonathan Swift's closed door.

Vischer's and Lipps' works are cited within virtually every discipline which mentions the history of empathy, and the ways their works suffer mis-reading provide key examples of common similar mis-readings. Lipps' final assertion above can look on the surface like a rather unscientific approach, yet

Lipps prefigures the growing willingness in the cognitive sciences of his time to attempt the study of willing, or pride, or other previously understudied states. At the same time, he prefigures in this contentious way the more recent concern with essential and even causal connections between these states and our experience of aesthetic contemplation. It is our contemporary understanding of the nature of science which can lead us to uncritically analyze his work, thereby limiting its scope, and debarring us from seeing the ways in which that work intersects currents of thought active today.

Similarly, the suggestion that Vischer's pattern of thought was aesthetic and Lipps' psychological is implicitly and sometimes explicitly, interpreted as a movement from aesthetics-as-philosophy to psychology-as-science (Davis 1996, 5), using all of these terms roughly as we define them today. This developmental interpretation suggests a greater division between Lipps' science and Vischer's aesthetics than really existed at the time, and even within those divisions suggests a greater clarity to Lipps' work relative to Vischer's than is supportable by the actual texts.

Aschenbrenner and Isenberg point out the considerable awkwardness in his prose due to "Lipps... forcing philosophic language to perform a kind of poetic task for which it is eminently unsuited" (1965, 401). The search for a prose appropriate to this dissertation generates in me a considerable empathy with his difficulties.

Lipps did not see himself practicing one side as over against the other, but rather "taught that philosophy ought to be a science of inner experience

coordinated with natural science, or, in other words, that it should be virtually identical with psychology" (Aschenbrenner and Isenberg 1965, 401). This is a reduction of philosophy to science, and it is clear that his methodological sympathies lie with the emerging natural sciences.

On the surface Vischer can look significantly less inclined in this scientific direction. Yet from the title on, his dissertation aligns itself in a direction far more similar to Lipps' than is sometimes allowed. Despite the fact that Vischer cites Karl Albert Scherner's book on dreams (Scherner 1861) as an essential source, he pronounces himself "unsympathetic with the mystical form of the generally abstract passages" (Vischer 1873/1993, 92). For Vischer, both dreams and introspection, as common human experiences, are considered legitimate as an object and a method of scientific study respectively, rather than foci of mysticism.

For Vischer, it is clear that “the eye has initiated a process” (1873/1993, 115), and even when he moves from discussing the mechanisms of seeing to those of mental images, he asserts “that this activity also essentially involves the central nervous system is evident from the unity of body and mind. The brain itself functions on many levels” (Vischer 1873/1993, 99). Clearly then not just Lipps but Vischer saw his work in a scientific light:

My principal concern in developing these concepts now becomes to explain mental stimulation in every case precisely through and together with bodily stimulation. Although the physiological knowledge at my disposal is inadequate for this task, it seems to me that the manner of its application is valid in itself and not unworthy of being carried forward and completed by the sure hand of a specialist in this field. We stand here before a “mystery that has to be explained by physiology in conjunction with psychology.” The attempt has to be made now, and in the end the daily—even hourly—discoveries will at least begin to illuminate the “impenetrable darkness that envelops those areas where the soul and the nerve centers are one.” (Vischer 1866, 142-43)

It’s not that they were trying to pull their philosophy out of one discipline into another but rather that the disciplines themselves, even in Lipps’ time, were not yet so distinguished from one another. Further, we need to remember that Vischer was writing 30 years earlier than Lipps. Mallgrave and Ikonomou point out that stances we deem incommensurable—metaphysics and scientific positivism, idealism and realism—“were generally perceived as working together toward the same goal.” The social sciences, “psychology, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and aesthetics... were presumed to share a common methodological footing,” and such distinctions as existed between these disciplines and the natural sciences were new and tenuous (1965, 4).

Perhaps the entire problem of distinguishing between these two thinkers can be summarized as a tendency to cite Lipps’ famous definition of empathy (“the felicitous enjoyment of the objectified self (Lipps 1903/1979, 373)”) as a stripping of Idealism from Vischer’s work. Vischer’s own comments do not support this distinction: “To trace the outline of a form is a self-movement, an act that is predominantly subjective: the form being no more than an arbitrary, wilful, and unilateral means by which the body can enjoy itself.” Only two paragraphs later, this imaginary and subjective event also has an objectifying outcome: “Yet even though this whole pleasure of self-motion is imagined, an objectiviza-

This is the work of Lipps’ mature years, and it is more reasoned and cautious than much of the other work cited here. Vischer’s, Worringer’s, and Listowel’s most enduring works, the ones cited here, were doctoral theses written by young men. They are ardent confident works. I cannot help but wonder just how ardent, how much more confident this dissertation might have been, had I written it in my twenties.

tion of the self.”

tion nevertheless takes place; we have a strange knack of confusing our own feeling with that of nature” (Vischer 1873/1993, 107). A more sensitive descriptor might mention Lipps’ phrase as a concise summary of Vischer’s own view. At the methodological level, they wrote as if believing their goals to be much the same as those of their predecessors and that those who followed, whatever the differences of opinion over the “content” of their thought, would likewise be engaging in the same very long conversation.

These alignments and distinctions commonly imposed upon Vischer and Lipps in fact misread the clear distinctions which now exist between disciplines such as science and philosophy backwards into the text. In addition, these interpretations typically read our own suspicions around anything other-than-material onto Vischer, just as they tend to do with Berkeley. Vischer’s way of seeing the world did not admit of this particular dichotomy, and hence his vision of empathy, even with its projection of the “ideal self” was a statement of reality for him on a par with other physical realities, or idealities.

When traditional disciplines, including those I access in this dissertation, dare to venture outside their usual fence lines, their record is often poor in a number of ways. Literary theory, notorious for pirating from other fields, certainly is not always respectful of the ways of being inherent to those fields. This approach is not inherently wrongheaded, since questioning the fundamental structures of thought behind these fields is often the goal of the endeavour. However, making not much of an attempt to understand things from within can lead to the sorts of worries and misinterpretations, such as Kohn’s almost wilful imposition of one kind of language upon another sort of disciplinary culture (above). Science likewise tends to subject everything it sees to its own approaches prior to or instead of making an attempt to grasp the language itself. There is a real cost to these failures. If we don’t attempt, when possible, to seek the contexts for earlier thinkers’ texts, we are easily led into a temporal chauvinism, whereby we miss the clarity and nuance existing in other and prior systems of thought, and attribute a far greater level of innovation and clarity than actually exists to our own.

I was fortunate to be sensitive to some of the relevant issues in the particular cases mentioned above, and hence can allow those sensitivities to inflect my own reading of the interpreters. Clearly,

however, there will be numerous situations where I will miss exactly the sorts of assumptions I criticize above. A constant suspicion, on my part and on yours, is clearly called for, along with a presumption that at least some of the earlier writers might just possibly have been as intelligent as some of the more recent ones. This sort of goodwill is often assumed these days as essential between cultures; it is the form of goodwill I hope to bring to this interdisciplinary work.

Given the enormous potential for fundamental misunderstanding, perhaps I am a fool to attempt such a wide reading. Nonetheless, I intend to make my best attempt, via the sort of goodwill just mentioned, and via states of alertness and suspicion, to read other disciplines with not just inter-linguistic, but inter-cultural care. With respect to the older writers, I will necessarily be regressing back down the stream, making my best effort to inhabit the relevant fields, to hear them from within their own idiom, while bringing them under the heading of empathy. There is no such thing as absolute clarity of understanding or interpretation in such an endeavour. There is no complete elimination of the refractions of disciplinary and temporal cataracts. I am perhaps seeking rather, like my father-in-law, to compensate for these distortions of my lenses as well as I can, by added light and glasses which reduce diffraction, so as to drive, if not at night, perhaps at least with more vigilance, and perhaps seeing the path with a little more definition than I might otherwise. I may still drive off the road.

Writing Voices

Like reading, writing has posed a series of technical and functional problems. The certainties and stabilities of texts written with given disciplines allow for great concision in exposition, for elegance in the writing, and for clarity in argument. This dissertation, however, straddles five or more disciplines, across the arts, humanities, and sciences.

When I first began this degree, I believed that I would somehow find a way to encompass and include insights from each of these disciplines in some reasonably smooth whole. I believed in my ability to accomplish this fusion not out of a disrespect for the rigour of the individual discourse related to these disciplines, but rather because, despite those rigours, I had read and written texts in each of these areas,

and this process had, after all, occurred within my one body without my brain exploding. In retrospect, this belief looks naïve, for reasons mentioned above and below.

In response to the agency/determinism discourse question already mentioned, I have made a structural choice. I have chosen to attempt to allow each of these two broad discourses a degree of integrity and autonomy within the individual Case Studies, by not jumping too quickly to analysis from “the other side” of the determinism/agency dichotomy. In the Coda at the end of Case Study III, I attempt to bring them together.

At the level of vocabulary, one challenge has been to establish the nature of “common knowledge.” Words and phrases which need no definition in one field are unused, or used differently, in others. Stories and theories that are so well known as to be deployed without citation in one discipline are unknown in the next. “Subject” and “object” and their various related forms, for example, carry a vast array

German dulness, and English affectation, have of late much multiplied among us the use of two of the most objectionable words that were ever coined by the troublesomeness of metaphysicians — namely, “Objective” and “Subjective”. (Ruskin 1856, §1)

of meanings: Is the “subject” of empathy the empathizer or the empathizee or some situation apparent to them both? And should I assume that every reader understands the “necessary and sufficient” approach to definitions? I have not wanted to burden this text, already made large and somewhat loose by its nature, with definitions and references necessary to only certain of its potential readers. I’ve adopted a number of strategies in this regard, including the glossary, and text boxes with stories, theories and commentary.

One of the most difficult aspects of this dissertation has been finding a language in which to write. I have tended to experience this, from the Creative Writing side of my background, as a crisis of voice. This “voice” is intuitive in practice—in every Creative Writing seminar I’ve attended, there has been very uniform agreement about when texts have shifted voice. It is composed of a complex mix including level and details of vocabulary, but also details of diction, level of formality, grammar, lengths of sentences, uses of commas, and is often closely related to the speaking voices (conceived broadly) available to any given person. I have made a number of false starts. In the earlier stages of my comprehensive essays, as I wrote particular sections, the language would seem to conform itself to the most recently read

articles and books, and hence take on the flavours of particular disciplines. Near the end of that process, I tried to incorporate more-typical creative writing—e.g. a metaphor of a lute—in the more conventionally academic parts. This resulted in writing which was inferior in my own estimation in both its academic and creative aspects, lacking the concision of the one and failing to become texts which would be independently readable as the other.

However, the comprehensive exam process provided its own answer in a quite social way. In addressing their various comments, I have wound up writing the discursive body of the dissertation to meet the needs and desires of my dissertation committee. Any part of this dissertation which can be understood by such a diverse group as my committee is generally going to be understood by thoughtful readers from outside the halls of academe, such as my close friends. The voice which I've adopted for the discursive passages feels very close to my own speaking voice when I describe my work to interested friends, albeit with greater technical description at points.

This voice, however, generates an anxiety. The sense that a voice may be in some way relatively natural to

<p>Reader, I think proper, before we proceed any farther together, to acquaint thee that I intend to digress, through this whole history, as often as I see occasion... (Tom Jones, Fielding 1749/1992, 10)</p>

me does not mean that it is my one real voice—I certainly have others. Further, the unity of discursive voice could potentially obscure the other voices which have contributed to this work—a problem much less apparent when the dissertation and the cited materials all speak similar idioms. The various caveats and digressions are, at times (*contra* Fielding, who warned his critics to “mind their own business” (1749/1992, 10)), attempts to answer the various critics who have already seen this dissertation, but are also attempts to disrupt that apparent unity. In addition, I've included a variety of other forms within the body of this text, not just quotes from other thinkers, but emails, fiction, stories, and poems by other people and by myself. I also conclude with an essay, written and edited with every intent toward publication as stand-alone non-fiction works. It is my hope that this multiplexity of form and voice will not just inform the text, but disrupt it, thus nodding toward the multi-disciplinary roots of this project, thereby transferring some continuing unease from the writer to the reader. Other “messy” choices include presenting the scanned images in the second Case Study with their edges showing. It is easy now to present a seam-

less image, edited on Photoshop. My images are no less constructed, but I hope they signal something of the complexity of my own process.

DIGRESSION—A VOCABULARY QUESTION

Well before trying to define empathy we need some words with which to describe the parties to empathy. If we take a human-to-human situation, there are two parties, a person experiencing empathy, and the person about whom they are experiencing empathy. These parties have received many different labels: subject-object and observer-model are among the most common. Subject-object has become suspect as a word-pair in many fields, but especially literary theory. Further, the technical usage, wherein the experiencer of empathy is the subject and the person they are responding to is the object, runs counter to ordinary usage, wherein I might easily say, “Chris was the subject of my empathy.” Model works well enough—it evokes a sense of a distance maintained, and has nice allusions to the visual arts, but its frequent partner, observer, is too clinical, and too exclusively visual. I prefer beholder, which, even though now primarily a “watcher, spectator,” still retains some resonances like those which attach to “behold” and “beholden.” These older senses arise from “be-“ intensifying “hold”: “to hold by,” “to concern,” and especially “to regard (with the mind), consider” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). In these hints, and even in its slightly archaic echoes, behold preserves the sense of mystery which pervades our experiences of those around us, and its mixing of discourses suits the nature of this work. This choice further frees object to mean some situation or state which the beholder and the model may or may not be focussed upon. At a practical level, where the vocabulary used within the sources is clear, I will leave it alone; where it is ambiguous, I will clarify by using “model” and “beholder.”



Areas I Won't Focus On

There are a significant number of other dissertations which could be written using the materials addressed in this one: the way empathy functions in the creative process for a writer, for example, or the role of em-

pathy in reactions to trauma received through artistic media, including visual, textual, and auditory. Indeed, there are entire disciplinary fields highly relevant to empathy which I will touch on almost not at all, except when they directly impact some specific particular central to the interests of this dissertation.

From Vischer on, various motivations for empathy have been propounded. Vischer suggests a desire to replace the inanimate with the human (1873/1993 24). While I agree with D'Arms (2000, 1482) that, "Whether the capacity for empathy has a selective history of the sort that might make it an adaptation is an interesting question," but we will avoid that question. I also will not focus upon the vast developmental literature about empathy, except in evolving a definition, and where it is very specifically relevant to other questions which are addressed in this dissertation.

My focus is upon adults, and I am interested in volitional implications, in choices which can be made around empathy and texts. Nevertheless, the psychological literature about the role of empathy in promoting pro-social behaviour, particularly altruistic action, while extremely important, is beyond the scope of this paper.

DIGRESSION: OTHER DISSERTATIONS I COULD HAVE WRITTEN WITH THESE MATERIALS

How trauma gets into the text: Empathy and the writer

How trauma gets out of texts: Empathy and the reader

Empathy and the rhetoric of genre: How do the reader's genre expectations influence their empathic experience of texts?

The writer's responsibility: Balancing our responsibilities to those we write about with those who will read us

When cultural relativism isn't enough: Empathy, recent critical theory, and international aid workers' decisions "on the ground"

When empathy isn't enough: Can Rogers' as if be trained, and what are the implications for engaging with other cultures

When the homeless need something from City Hall: The role of individual stories in invoking productive empathy without invoking excessive empathic trauma

How good science becomes bad popular literature: The migration of empathy from brain scans into newspapers, news magazines, and popular science magazines

Explanations from empathic denial—empathy can CAUSE denial—as we re-experience the trauma

Implications for ethical maturity: A correlation of the development of empathy in childhood with development of understandings of reality



History and Definitions of the Term “Empathy”

I'll begin this exploration of the history and definitions of empathy by asserting my belief that there are some aspects of human experience similar enough from human to human to deserve a definition under the word empathy. One evidence for this is that empathy, even viewed from vastly different fields, appears quite similar in important ways. Given this similarity, and because the word empathy and its immediate predecessor *Einfühlung* were coined at a relatively recent time, there can be a sense that its history and meanings are much clearer than terms of more ancient provenance. This sense is in certain ways an illusion. Empathy has its roots in many and complex earlier concepts and has evolved in complex ways within a wide array of disciplines.

DIGRESSION AND CAVEAT: WHO REALLY INVENTED THE TERM *EINFÜHLUNG*

Furthering the sense of complexity within this current document, I need to point out that it would take several more years than I have already spent to read every relevant document in English alone, even if the literature were not constantly expanding. Further, I don't read German—the language of much of the important work—though I must make at least some attempt to understand the impact of works in that language upon the current project. In yet another example of reading at least partially blind, I am often dependent upon others' summaries of the history, knowing they in turn may merely be citing work other than their own.

I've been writing, and will shortly begin writing again, in a way very similar to that of the historical summaries of empathy offered in any number of texts. However, both the confidence and linearity of this approach are suspect. Many histories of empathy assert that Robert Vischer invented the term *Einfühlung*.

The act whereby we bestow on things our own soul and its moods... has been christened *Einfühlung* by Volkelt and Robert Vischer. (Listowel 1933, 54)

This term was first used by R. Vischer in his essay *Über das Optische Formgefühl*. (Listowel 1933, 54 note 2)

In 1872 Robert Vischer... named this process *Einfühlung*. (Gauss 1973, 86)

The word *Einfühlung* (empathy) occurs in [*Über das Optische Formgefühl*] for the first time. (Wind 1985, 150-1 note 90)

However, in a note on one of my comprehensive exams, my supervisor queried such bald assertions, and asked me to “verify” this assertion. My attempt to confirm this one apparently straightforward fact led me into hours of work over several weeks. I began by checking Edgar Wind’s note, cited as a source in a “History of the Concept of Empathy” (Wispé 1987), which was itself cited by numerous other books and articles. It was Wind’s comment about another author in the same note that suggested a possible chain of misattributions.

Even more surprising is that Geoffrey Scott, who had studied Wöflin with much care, found it possible in 1914 to introduce empathy as a revolutionary aesthetic (*The Architecture of Humanism* viii), mistakenly ascribing its invention to Lipps, who was in fact its systematizer. (Wind 1985, 150 note 90)

I had noticed in passing this same misattribution to Lipps in a number of texts (e.g. Håkansson 2003, 1-2), but while Wind described this misattribution, he didn’t give any very good support for his own claims about Vischer.

None of the other quite extensive references I possessed gave any clear source for their assertions about this question of Vischer’s invention of *Einfühlung*. Further, I couldn’t determine, even with those like Listowel and Wind who apparently read German, whether they had an exhaustive knowledge of the period and literature in question.

I launched a search on the internet for papers mentioning any of several related topics. After a number of false starts I found a very generous Lotze expert (William Woodward) who directed me to the “world expert in the history of empathy,” Dr. Christian Allesch, whose response to a detailed description of my confusion is as follows:

From: Christian.Allesch@sbg.ac.at
Sent: Wednesday, March 16, 2005 3:27 AM
To: kcooper@interchange.ubc.ca
Subject: One quick question

Dear Karen,
Volkelt originally used the term "Beseelung" but described this phenomenon very similar to Robert Vischer's "Einfühlung" (for example in his book on the "Symbolbegriff" of 1876). Vischer's doctoral thesis - in which he introduced the Term "Einfühlung" as a systematic term in aesthetics - was published in 1872. At least with respect to this systematical use of the term Vischer is

right to claim priority. However, you can find the term already in the "Aesthetics" of his father Friedrich Theodor Vischer who speaks about "unbewusstes Einfühlen der Seele" [*the unconscious projecting of the soul*] in this context. Thus, the basic idea can be traced to F. Th. Vischer but it was Robert who elaborated it to a systematic theory. You will find some information in the respective chapter of my book; a copy of this chapter is already on the way to you.

....

Best regards,
Christian Allesch

At last! Someone who *had* read all of the relevant documents, and had written a chapter in a book detailing what he found there about the history of empathy. I trusted his assessment, so in one sense my quest was over. In addition, how exciting to be able to read his history of the term. His chapter, however, arrived in German, pointing in a painful way to one of my original problems. With his permission I sought a translator, but upon discovering that the cost would be a minimum of U.S. \$500.00, I gave up.

I could have given up much earlier; after all the answer in the end was not especially enlightening. While I gained a useful sense of the extent to which empathy or something like it was in the air, it matters very little for this dissertation whether Robert Vischer precisely invented the term, or merely conjugated some concept which clearly was abroad amongst his colleagues, including his illustrious father. My inability to let go, however, clued me in to a particular disciplinary uncertainty and anxiety. I am not an historian, even of the term which most interests me, so my uncertainty was as to how much was enough—how far did I need to go in attempting to read what had been written by those who *were* experts? This uncertainty and its associated anxieties attach to much of this dissertation. Still, the experience freed me from ever hoping to gain adequate answers to any of a variety of questions in the disciplines I reference. The anxiety is not thereby put to bed, but it is stored in the closet, and however frequently it pokes its head out I must simply move on.

All of this provides a cautionary tale for my readers as well. There is a substantial degree of uncertainty about any of these texts. The more abstracted the history, the more steps from the original texts, the less confidence any of us ought to feel. Indeed, as Wind's comments show, even someone far closer to the original works can get it wrong. However it's far too cumbersome to precede every sentence with,

“the balance of probabilities suggests that Jones said the following in year X” or, the more personal but honest comment, “everyone appears to believe the following, but what the hell do I know.” Instead I have provided this cautionary digression and now that I know that you know that I don’t know, I’ll now proceed to treat this more or less the way everyone else does—taking my best guess based on the evidence and writing as if it were far more certain than it appears to be.



History

The word empathy has a relatively short history. In his doctoral thesis of 1873, Robert Vischer coined the German noun *Einfühlung* (“in-feeling” or “feeling-into”) and developed a substantial description of empathy as it relates to the production and apprehension of art. Vischer’s ideas were fleshed out by Theodor Lipps, and entered psychology via the work of psychologist Edward Titchener, who coined the word “empathy” as a translation of the German term.

PRE-VISCHER

Two strands of thought, one regarding sympathy and one aesthetics, are of interest leading up to Vischer’s work. It is in some ways artificial to separate them, since these early thinkers were usually concerned both with human-to-human sympathy and with the arts, amongst a wide variety of mental phenomena, and the setting for their thought is often an epistemological drive to explore how we know anything at all.

The concept of sympathy was developed in a systematic way in the 18th century by David Hume and Adam Smith, among others, and incorporated a wide variety of emotions and responses which we would now differentiate under headings such as identity, sympathy, empathy and altruism. Hume was read by Lipps, and mentioned with great approval. In an attempt to explain “benevolent concern for the well-being of others,” he describes the way emotion is transmitted from one person to another, beginning with the “unreflective transfer of emotional expressions from model to observer,” in a non-cognitive mimicry we would now call “contagion” (D’Arms 2000, 1483-87). Hume also “observed ‘a very remarkable inclination in human nature, to bestow on external objects the same emotions which it observes in

itself' ... which he thought noticeable only in 'children, poets, and the ancient philosophers'" (Aschenbrenner and Isenberg 1965, 401). In the next century, though still prior to Robert Vischer, Ruskin would formulate this tendency as the pathetic fallacy, though what Ruskin calls the pathetic fallacy, "... [Vischer's] doctrine of empathy denies... is a fallacy at all, or rather, it confines the inclination to its proper sphere and investigates its rather remarkable workings" (Aschenbrenner and Isenberg 1965, 401).

Smith, likewise hoping to explain individual moral self-restraint, also believes in fellow-feeling. But he proposes active imagination as the mechanism, generating "sensations which are generally similar to, although typically weaker than, those of the other person" (Davis 1996, 3). These two mechanisms of identification have remained both essential and contentious in all ensuing discussions of empathy.

Mallgrave and Ikonomou place Vischer's aesthetics in the context of a key turning point, looking back toward Immanuel Kant and forward toward a modern sensibility (Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994, 2-4). Indeed Kant contributed a number of notions which not only influenced Vischer, but which have remained important to concepts of empathy. For Kant, form and space are "mental constructions of the observer, a subjective condition under which sense perception operates" (Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994, 5), hence the judgement of beauty is located firmly in the subject, not the object of the contemplation (Gauss 1973, 85-6). He distinguished disinterested aesthetic contemplation as a "fascinated attention" apart from virtually all other concerns including "practical, moral, cognitive, appetitive interest" (Rader 1979, 332). Kant's Idealism, however, led him into serious difficulties and inconsistencies, including an insistence that there could be, for example, "no ideal house or palace" in art, since "only the human form... can convey the moral attributes of heart, purity..." (Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994, 8).

Arthur Schopenhauer, to whom much later work, including Vischer is "fundamentally indebted" (Morgan 1996, 318), developed the subjective side of Kant's thought. He treated contemplation of nature, architecture, music, and art as alike involving a "will-less aesthetic" contemplation, which provided an escape from the realm of blind will. He also sharpened the focus on the physiology of perception. (Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994, 8-10). What is revealed, and what the artist can then embody in his me-

dium, is “the eternal platonic form underlying appearances” (Morgan 1996, 319). Especially interesting for empathy is the loss of self entailed when in contemplation we “devote the whole power of our mind to perception.” In this act, “we lose ourselves entirely in this object”; all sense of self dissolves along with any distinction between the perceiver and the perceived (Schopenhauer in Morgan 1996, 319).

The most significant influence on Robert Vischer was certainly his famous father, Frederick Theodor Vischer, who in exploring form, space, and symbolism, especially in the realm of architecture, derived “the notion of ‘aesthetic symbolism’, or the involuntary and unconscious treatment of art and nature as symbolic of human life and personality...” (Listowel 1933, 53). This activity is an “animation of art and nature, the act whereby we bestow on things our own soul and its moods, a peculiar and strictly aesthetic activity...” (Listowel 1933, 54). The philosophical context for this work was Idealism: “... beauty for him, was still in essence the sensuous appearance, or the appearance in sensuous form, of the metaphysical Idea... the unique spiritual substance of which the entire universe is fabricated” (Listowel 1933, 52). F. T. Vischer seems to have used the word *Einfühlen* in this context. Robert Vischer inherited the Idealism and adopted the concept, setting to work in his doctoral thesis first by inventing the term *Einfühlung*, then by exploring its mechanisms in the viewing and production of art.

VISCHER AND LIPPS

In his introduction to his thesis, *On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics (Über das Optische Formgefühl: Ein Beitrag zur Ästhetik)*, Vischer approvingly outlines aspects from the work of several immediate predecessors in the long history of discussion around the topics of form, space, and art, describing them as the basis for his own work. His father, Frederick Theodor Vischer, has contributed a distinction between two aesthetic effects which occur through sensation when observing inorganic and “lower organic” (plant) phenomena: in the first, we “involuntarily read our emotions into them,” tending to confuse the phenomena with this content. In the second, we “maintain our freedom to perceive the symbolic process as nothing more than an analogy” (Vischer 1873/1993). Karl Köstlin has described an

awareness of the human tendency to see in everything a reflection of one's own "mental states, experiences, sensations, moods, emotions, and passions" (Köstlin 1869, 322-326).

However, the most crucial immediate influence for Robert Vischer is provided by a book on dreams, *Das Leben des Traums* (The Life of the Dream), by Karl Albert Scherner (1861).

Here it was shown how the body, in responding to certain stimuli in dreams, objectifies itself in spatial forms. Thus it unconsciously projects its own bodily form—and with this also the soul—into the form of the object. From this I derived the notion that I call "empathy" [*Einfühlung*]. (Vischer 1873/1993)

Both Vischer and Lipps were concerned with both aesthetic and human-to-human empathy. A certain number of writers, usually in psychology, simply impute the creation of the term *Einfühlung* to Lipps, and give it only its psychological weight (the likely father of these mistakes is mentioned in Wind (1985, 150-1). Others from a variety of disciplines perpetuate another common misconception about the topic to which Vischer and Lipps addressed themselves. Fairly typical descriptions might run:

[*Einfühlung*] was used in German aesthetics to refer to a postulated kind of response to art, in which one first engages in some involuntary bodily mimicry of the work, then projects onto it an emotional response that somehow fits with one's acquitted bodily posture. Theodor Lipps eventually came to think the phenomenon could occur in interpersonal cases as well (D'Arms 2000, 1478)

or:

But here the theory of *Einfühlung* virtually turns itself on its head. Originally the paradigmatic cases of empathy were inanimate objects, including "expressive" works of art. Once psychotherapy and ethics captured the term, however, persons became paradigmatic. (Depew 2005, §9)

The first of these is by a philosopher writing in a law journal, the second by a professor of rhetoric, writing in a journal for that discipline.

Davis (1996, 5), Gauss (1973), and Barnes and Thagard (1997) also trace this supposed development of thought from aesthetic projection or union with inanimate forms to projection upon humans, as if somehow the earlier thinkers hadn't noticed the phenomenon relative to other people until *after* recognizing it in reactions to architecture, sculpture and painting. Aside from being slightly ridiculous, this construction is inaccurate in several important ways. While it is true that Vischer's focus is more aesthetic and Lipps' more psychological, it would be far more accurate to say that both Vischer and Lipps assume

something like empathy between humans, and *also* apply it to artistic objects. Vischer, for example, describes a farmer, cheerful at good weather, downcast at hail:

And yet as long as the farmer supposes that he alone is affected, the difference between his feeling and his sensation can only be one of degree Only by considering our fellow beings do we ascend to a true emotional life. This natural love for my species is the only thing that makes it possible for me to project myself mentally; with it, I feel not only myself but at the same time the feeling of another being. (Vischer 1873/1993, 103)

In Vischer's own eyes, his innovation, and that of those predecessors he approvingly cites, has to do with extending this concept and its ramifications to the viewing and production of art. While over-limiting the concept, the Earl of Listowel, having acknowledged the long history of "sympathy," at least gets it the right way around in his discussion of *Einfühlung* when he says that for these thinkers, "all delight in beauty is ultimately nothing but a joyous feeling of sympathy" (Listowel 1933, 57).

The genius of the thing is precisely that Vischer and Lipps are keen to explore the relationship between the acknowledged existence of human-to-human empathy and our reactions to art, and as traced above, clearly much prior thinking about each of these was extant. Viewing the two strands together, they begin the process of clarifying and separating empathy away from sympathy. At the same time, without denying that our responses to humans are different, their approach calls attention to the fundamental oneness of our perceptual systems and our responses, but not simply from the mechanistic physiological side—the same eyes, the same perceptual organs taking in the data. The idea is still that our reactions to art, to other people, and to the world as a whole are conditioned by something much more fundamental, but this fundamental conditioner is something complex and warm and lively—empathy. This approach represents a shift in point of view, asking how something intricate and human influences our perception, and involves Vischer and Lipps in the increasingly modern, even post-modern, discussion of the construction of reality.

EMPATHY POST-LIPPS

Several strands can be traced in the emergence of empathy from the era of Vischer and Lipps in diverse areas including aesthetics, the emerging social sciences, and psychology.

DIGRESSION: CONCURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

The evolution of any complex idea is nearly impossible to trace, as certain lines of thought come together, others diverge, and still others die out completely. A given conceptual mutation may arise independently in several places at once, as if its time has come. Further, when focussing within the eventual products of this chaotic developmental process, it is the nature of explorations such as this dissertation to work backwards in a quite linear way through obvious nodes of influence, ignoring offshoots which do not seem closely related to where we now find ourselves. This is a necessary simplification, and in a moment, I too will select the strands of thought which serve my goals and illuminate the writings I most want to use, but prior to doing so I want to establish that the actual situation is considerably more confused.

We've already seen that the concept which became *Einfühlung* emerged from a welter of discussions, often but not always under the rubric of some form of sympathy. Ruskin's pathetic fallacy and Volkelt's *Beseelung* have already been mentioned. Just to take two further examples, in a later edition of his thesis Vischer himself notes, "Only after completing the present work did I become aware of Hermann Lotze's *Mikrokosmos* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1856-1854)" (1873/1993, 92). In the *Mikrokosmos* and even more in later works Lotze had indeed already described and developed something very similar to Vischer's *Einfühlung* but ascribed its action primarily to a form of recollection fusing remembered physical states to particular emotional memories (Listowel 1933, 53; Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994, 20).

Similarly, while Titchener (1909/1967) certainly introduced the word "empathy" into English, by 1897 Vernon Lee (Violet Paget) had already read Vischer and written about *Einfühlung*, thereby introducing the German term into English aesthetics. Interestingly, like Titchener and Lotze, she linked *Einfühlung* to physical sensation allied with remembrance (Gauss 1973, 86). Others, such as Baldwin, were at about this time developing closely related concepts such as ejective consciousness to explain the sense that we can know what is going on in other minds (Wispé 1987).

Despite this multiplicity of interacting developments, however, Vischer's work appears genuinely to have acted as an hourglass-like narrowing of the conceptual stream, collecting various strands of thought into a tight circumference by coining a term and then releasing it with its related concept. This

conceptual move, particularly as interpreted by Lipps, then opened out again into the new and ever-widening disciplines which were establishing themselves.

Let's now return to my own necessarily linear and reductive account.



In Aesthetics

Empathy experienced “its greatest acceptance as a fundamental principle of the theory of art” during the early 1900’s and thereafter its influence as a concept within that realm waned rapidly (Gauss 1973, 88). Depew suggests two reasons for the waning of empathy as a construct in aesthetics. In the practice of art, the move toward “alienation and defamiliarization rather than identification” lessened the relevance of empathy. More generally, the tight link between aesthetics and German nation-building led, via the Holocaust, to the discrediting of much of that aesthetics, and particularly of “any strong link between aesthetics and empathy” (Depew 2005, 3). A further influence, already evident in Lipps, entails the separating of the various disciplines, with the study of the psychology of aesthetics moving firmly into the psychological camp. In recent years, there have been occasional revivals of interest in empathy as a descriptive construct within aesthetics. Shoul (2003), for example, examines recent work from within the cognitive sciences in reviving an empathic reading of architecture, primarily from the unconscious side, referencing Lipps, among others, whose, “... assumptions have rested upon intuitions about assumed faculties, common to everyone, which enable meaningful connections to be made about rather disparate ‘things in the head’ æ between feelings stimulated by sensuous, bodily experience, and feelings stimulated by the experience of kinds of art” (Shoul 2003, 1). In the application of scientific research and forms of thought to aesthetic questions, this attempt and others like it are very much in Lipps’ vein and would please him, I think.

In the Emerging Social Sciences

According to Gauss, a second strand of thought emerged within the social sciences, as they began to distinguish themselves and their epistemologies for both the arts and the hard sciences. Thinkers such as Weber and Dilthey made empathic understanding a method for discovery in fields such as history and

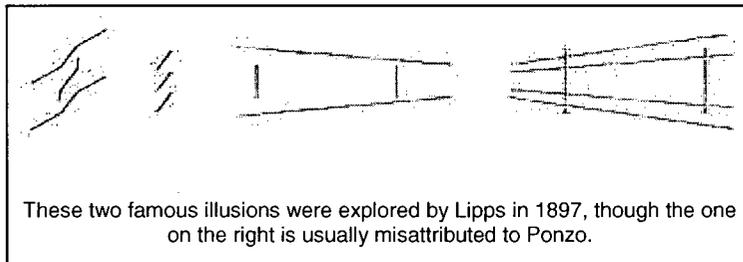
anthropology. This approach made a knowledge claim which went beyond that of Lipps, namely that through a deliberate projection we could in some sense truly re-experience “the motivations and mental purposes of another” and thus had access to the “causes of that person’s actions” (Gauss 1973; 86-7). This strand touches again upon the more conscious side of empathy mentioned by Hume, and looks forward to the empathic therapeutic method of Rogers.

In Psychology and the Human Sciences

The developments in aesthetics and in the social sciences no doubt interplayed with those in psychology. However, it is in psychology, individual, social, and developmental, that we find the movements which lead eventually both to the harder sciences in their approach to empathy and to the common language understanding of the term.

Theodor Lipps

In psychology, Lipps proves to be a critical hinge. As we’ve mentioned, his methodology and his understandings are in many ways similar to Vischer’s. Nonetheless, he strips from his writing the Idealist



metaphysics which surround Vischer’s discussions of *Einfühlung* and points toward the scientific psychology which is by his time firming up as a very distinct

endeavour. Perhaps due to his work in optical illusions, where he had already concluded that at least some illusions could be explained on the basis of “the characteristics of those who viewed them,” he also exhibits a greater sensitivity to the extent to which one’s own inner state influences one’s experience of *Einfühlung* (Wispé 1987, 19).

Edward Titchener

The word empathy enters English and is truly popularized by Titchener*. Both Lipps and Titchener regard empathy toward another human

*Probably—Depew points out that the word *empathies* was deployed by Plotinus, with, however, a quite different meaning, namely as an intense state, the opposite of apathy. Thus Vischer may have been deliberately translating the Greek word into German, and Titchener could be making a similar move into English. (Depew 2005, §5-7)

as similar to the aesthetic version. Titchener, however, goes further in limiting empathy to inner imita-

tion. In a series of lectures from 1909, Titchener wants to discuss “free kinaesthetic images,” ideal states which correspond to kinaesthetic sensation as visual images correspond to direct visual sensation, and in the process gives a more detailed description of the processes of empathy (Titchener 1909/1967, 20). He notes that he has been, up to a certain time, in doubt that such things existed at all, but now says:

You will notice the difference at once... if you compare an actual nod of the head with the mental nod that signifies assent to an argument Now that it has become clear, I seem to find that the kinaesthetic image and the kinaesthetic sensation differ in all essential respects precisely as visual image differs from visual sensation. (Titchener 1909/1967, 21)

Because visual images and kinaesthesia often act together, “Not only do I see gravity and modesty... , but I feel or act them in the mind’s muscles.” He labels this activity “a simple case of empathy, if we may coin that term as a rendering of *Einfühlung*” (Titchener 1909/1967, 21). Even more than Lipps, he sees all from a sensational point of view.

Both the production and reception of words and the experience of empathy interact mutually with our kinaesthetic states. So Titchener’s kinaesthetic state is physically different should he sit down to type a lecture as compared to sitting down to type a letter to a friend. Similarly, his experience of incoming sensation is influenced by “an author’s choice and arrangement of words, by the intonation of a speaking voice, by the nature of my physical and social environment at large,” and his eventual empathic reactions by the situation, internal and external, in which he finds himself (Titchener 1909/1967, 174-85). While Titchener is unquestionably a psychologist committed to the scientific exercise he at numerous points refers to musical and literary applications of his theories. He believes that conscious ideas or sensations can result from the accumulation of unconscious events. Titchener thus locates the understanding of empathy further away from conscious or deliberate response toward the unconscious and immediate.

Titchener to Rogers

After Titchener, empathy ceased to be much of a focus in experimental psychology. It was, however, mentioned by Freud, and explored in depth by a series of personality therapists, beginning in the 1920’s and continuing through the last century. These theorists, including Downey, Allport, and Murphy, leaned toward psychotherapy and away from behaviourism. In each case, however, they adopted wide definitions of empathy, elaborating both unconscious inner imitation and conscious inferential identifica-

tion. Despite a certain increase in clarity, however, Wispé contends that the concept had still “only been applied, rather than analyzed,” prior to the advent of Carl Rogers’ work (Wispé 1987, 25-27).

Carl Rogers

If any one person can lay claim to popularizing the idea of empathy within the therapeutic community and thereby shaping its wider public sense it would be psychotherapist and personality theorist Carl Rogers. His wider impact arises first from his focus upon empathy within his practice not just as a therapist, but as a researcher. Lauren Wispé claims, “Without doubt, the present popularity of empathy as a construct comes from Rogers’s emphasis on it, and his definition put it squarely into an objective, researchable, personality framework” (Wispé 1987, 29). Håkansson acknowledges Rogers’ empirical approach, but suggests that he was, “less concerned with a theory of empathy than with finding a term to convey that particular attitude of nonjudgmentally entering another inner world he regarded as so important in psychotherapy” (Håkansson 2003, 4). His essential formulation is:

The state of empathy, or being empathic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the “as if” condition. Thus it means to sense the hurt or the pleasure of another as he senses it and to perceive the causes thereof as he perceives them, but without ever losing the recognition that it is *as if* I were hurt or pleased and so forth. If this “as if” quality is lost, then the state is one of identification (Rogers 1959, 210-11).

We see here that, despite his emphasis on an empirical approach to the assessment of empathy, this theorist’s own definition sees no paradox between that approach and formulations describing empathy as that which allows the therapist to “perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy” (Rogers 1959, 210), or, in a later paper, “entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it” (Rogers 1975, 4). His caveats about maintaining clarity about the nature of this process, namely that it is undergone *as if* one were the client (Rogers 1959, 211), do not imply a limit on the extent to which one can be accurate, but rather upon the emotional participation of the therapist, since it is important for the therapist to maintain, for example, a lack of fear in areas where the client is fearful. Rogers *as if* can be seen as advocating a deliberate dose of the old Idealists’ disinterested contemplation, this time with respect to the client.

DIGRESSION: WHEN THE FATHER OF CONTEMPORARY EMPATHY COULDN'T WRITE
ABOUT EMPATHY

In a paper in 1975, Rogers describes a process whereby his earlier descriptions of therapeutic process were reduced by others to caricatures. "I was so shocked by these complete distortions of our approach that for a number of years I said almost nothing about empathic listening, and when I did it was to stress an empathic attitude with little comment as to how this might be implemented in the relationship" (Rogers 1975, 3). Thus the father of empathic therapy abandoned a core concept in his writing and speaking for a very long time rather than risk severe misrepresentation. Yet he is by 1975 constrained to address empathy forthrightly again. "[Empathy] is one of the most delicate and powerful ways we have of using ourselves" (Rogers 1975, 2), he points out. Further, "Over the years, however, the research evidence keeps piling up, and it points strongly to the conclusion that a high degree of empathy in a relationship is possibly *the* most potent and certainly one of the most potent factors in bringing about change and learning" (Rogers 1975, 3). Also, he believes he senses growing desire to shift away from forms of therapy in which the therapist is the expert, and a shift toward "ways of being with people which evoke *self*-directed change, which locate power in the person, not the expert..." (Rogers 1975, 3). As a result of all of these factors, he writes a glorious and detailed article about empathy, summarizing his own findings and those of many others, along with his many years' experience in therapy, to re-iterate the essential nature of empathy.

This entire story points to the various currents, professional and personal, which can influence the texts which come down to us. In Roger's case we have his explanation for the long absence of empathy from his written work. Even when we can't know their precise nature, it's worthwhile for us to assume that similar pressures are active upon all written work at some level. And as we'll see in Case Study III, those pressures appear particularly intense when viewing research into controversial or easily disbelieved phenomena such as ritual abuse.



In later work, Rogers moves to viewing empathy as a process rather than a state (1975, 4). However, his later work amounts more to an elaboration and working out of empathy, than to any significant move away from his earlier formula. I've included Rogers' full 1975 definition of empathy in an appendix (I).

Earlier thinkers, including Hume, remarked upon seemingly disparate areas such as interpersonal behaviour and aesthetic enjoyment without necessarily correlating the two. Robert Vischer, and those who followed him, perceived and described a realm of human experience which can be described as applying to both works of art and interpersonal relations, noting a similarity in our experience of these apparently disparate areas of activity. Carl Rogers, though he is the result of the dissolution of empathy back into separate streams, and is writing with purely the psychological focus, echoes the aesthetics of a writer addressing only poetry. For now let me point out the similarities between a passage describing the first order of poets, "who feel strongly, think strongly, and see truly" (Ruskin 1856, §9):

That is to say, the one knows too much, and perceives and feels too much of the past and future, and of all things beside and around that which immediately affects him, to be in anywise shaken by it. His mind is made up; his thoughts have an accustomed current; his ways are steadfast; it is not this or that new sight which will at once unbalance him. He is tender to impression at the surface, like a rock with deep moss upon it; but there is too much mass of him to be moved. (Ruskin 1856, §10)

and this one, describing the resistance of the strong therapist to over-identification:

To be with another in this way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another's world without prejudice. In some sense it means that you lay aside your self and this can only be done by a person who is secure enough in himself that he knows he will not get lost in what may turn out to be the strange or bizarre world of the other, and can comfortably return to his own world when he wishes. (Rogers 1975, 4)

This is a small example, but so late in the process of empathy's development a telling one—certain aesthetic and personal phenomena seem to claim a similar treatment—which observation makes an excellent position from which to leave this historical overview and enter definitional negotiations.

Definitions

I've conducted several years of informal research into the common language sense of empathy, in dozens of conversations, in coffee houses and hospital waiting rooms, on the downtown Eastside of Vancouver, in New York City and Montreal, on buses, and at fancy dinners. Beginning first with my friends, then

branching out to acquaintances, and finally even with strangers, I've asked people to tell me what they understand by the word "empathy." With remarkable consistency, my interogees have articulated something like, "Feeling what someone else is feeling." Many, perhaps half, have added, "Putting yourself in someone else's shoes." The sense of empathy which has emerged in these conversations would be entirely consistent with a combination of definitions such as these:

The power of projecting one's personality into (and so fully comprehending) the object of contemplation. (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*)

The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner; also : the capacity for this. (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*)

Empathy is the experiential recognizing and understanding of the states of mind, including beliefs, desires and particularly emotions of others without injecting your own. This concept is often characterized as the ability to "put oneself into another's shoes," or experiencing for oneself the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself. In this sense it might be described as a sort of emotional resonance. (Wikipedia: Empathy)

However, in technical contexts, and even were we to confine ourselves to psychology alone, we would be hard pressed to find much agreement about the extent and limits of the term empathy. Daniel Batson *et al*, for example, point out that, "Psychologists are noted for using terms loosely, but in our use of empathy we have outdone ourselves" (Batson, Fultz, and Schoenrade 1987b, 19). I think Batson *et al* are too hard on their discipline, given that the history we've traced above more than indicates that (despite the apprehension mentioned above that there is something worth consolidating) definitions of empathy have been to date so profuse and diffuse as to render consistent definition very difficult. Recent definitions in technical works range from Hoffman's extraordinarily terse "affective response more appropriate to another's situation than one's own" (Hoffman 2000, 4) to Nilsson's book-length dissertation which is in its entirety a philosophical attempt at the definition of a single word, empathy (Nilsson 2003). For my purposes, a useful definition will stay close to everyday understandings of empathy, with a description narrow enough to distinguish empathy from other related constructs, and broad enough to allow the discussion of ethical issues relating to mature empathic engagement with a wide variety of texts.

DIGRESSION—SIMILARITY AND ACCURACY, ONCE AGAIN

I've already stated that notions of similarity and accuracy can be meaningfully addressed within at least one of the contexts of this dissertation. Attempts to grapple with these topics take various forms in the empathy literature. Many writers simply speak as if at least relative accuracy is possible, or as if there is no difficulty. Nilsson says:

To say that empathy with respect to an emotional state of a certain qualitative kind requires merely feeling an emotion of the same kind is, in other words, to say that if you have empathy with respect to another person's anger, then you have to merely feel anger, and if you have empathy with respect to the fear of another person, then you have to merely feel fear. Put more specifically, this means that in order to have empathy with someone with respect to an emotional state of a certain kind, you must have the affective experience characteristic of that kind of state. This, I take it, is neither controversial nor problematic. (Nilsson 2003, 136, "merely" refers to Nilsson's technical argument)

Of course, it is "neither controversial nor problematic" only if one assumes that one can in some way assess the similarity of others' affective states well enough to gauge that they can be labelled as the same emotions. Hoffman at least acknowledges the complexity:

Affective empathy seems like a simple concept—one feels what the other feels—and many writers define it in simple outcome terms: One empathizes to the extent that one's feeling matches the other's feeling. The more I study empathy, however, the more complex it becomes. Consequently, I have found it far more useful to define empathy not in terms of outcome (affect match) but in terms of the processes underlying the relationship between the observer's and the model's feeling. The key requirement of an empathetic response according to my definition is the involvement of psychological processes that make a person have feelings that are more congruent with another's situation than with his own situation. The empathy-arousing processes often produce the same feeling in observer and victim but not necessarily, as when one feels empathic anger on seeing someone attacked even when the victim feels sad or disappointed rather than angry. (Hoffman 2000, 30)

While acknowledging the complexity, Hoffman still accepts the possibility of "the same feeling."

Others choose a more moderated language:

Empathy means someone is being influenced by mechanisms "that tend to influence the emotional reactions of one person—the "observer"—so as to produce a match (roughly some sort of congruence) between these emotions and those of another person—the "model." (D'Arms 2000, 1480)

Again, what constitutes "a match" or "congruence" is not addressed. Vreek and van der Mark address the question more directly: "[Situating empathy within a context of communication] allows one to bypass questions like 'can one ever feel what another persons [*sic*] feels?'" Further, under this construct, "There is no particular need for explaining how the mind is capable of tracing the truth, in this case, the feeling state of others" (2003, 180).

Bypassing the question is certainly tempting. We could, for example, simply agree with Vreeke and van der Mark that, “Empathy thrives on how the empathic person *presupposes* that the other feels, not on how he actually feels” (2003, 180). However, the relevance to empathy of the other’s actual feeling is assumed by most common language speakers and by many of those who use it in a technical sense as well. Wispé’s influential description states that, “*Empathy*... refers to the attempt by one self-aware self to comprehend unjudgmentally the positive and negative experiences of another self. These emotions and reactions are often unclearly understood by the other person... so one important aspect of this process is empathic accuracy” (Wispé 1986, 318).

The common language users of the term do not naively assume some exact correspondence, but nonetheless believe it possible to feel something *like* what the other is feeling. One tunes, emotionally or musically, to a particular pitch, and the tunability of one’s empathy seems of the essence of the experience in intimate relationships, as we’ll see in looking at the poem “After He has Gone,” below. Oddly, and without making any attempt to rationalize its inclusion, even Vreeke and van den Mark acknowledge the possibility of accuracy:

Empathic reactions, after all are bound to bear the effect of previous empathic and other communicative encounters. If your friend fails on an exam, you might image or deduct [*sic*] from your memory that she will be disappointed and accordingly try to console her. She, however, is bound to correct your attempts at consolation, if she does not care about the exam at all Empathic accuracy does not only stem from one’s empathic abilities, but relates to what one knows and has learned from others in previous encounters (Vreeke and van der Mark 2003, 187)

With respect to texts, there is no two-way relationship with the persons portrayed. However, for better or worse, one of the important roles texts play as they engage and disengage our empathy is that of training our empathic responses to those we encounter within them, with important implications for Case Study II, below. When examining the sacrificial practices of long-dead Incans, the impossibility of perfect accuracy must be acknowledged. Nevertheless, the relative efficacy of that training, and of the consequent image we build of those concerned, is of at least some interest.

Yet despite the enormous difficulties involved, the acceptance of at least potential similarity and its implications for relative accuracy will be assumed. As we will see below, it is precisely the idea of a

replication or approximation of the experience of the other which specifically characterizes the common language view of empathy, setting it apart from sympathy, mimicry, and various other similar concepts.

In this dissertation, I will make use of many of the terms and phrases deployed by others, including D'Arms correspondence (2000, 1481), Hoffman's congruence (2000, 30), and terms arising from musical and physical metaphors, such as resonance and touch.



Empathy interacts with an entire constellation of other related terms. The attempts below toward a useful definition amount to interrogating the various more-technical definitions of empathy and its related terms relative to the common language uses of these terms.

SYMPATHY

As already noted, sympathy predated empathy conceptually, and remains its closest cognate. By the time we've separated the two, we'll have done most of the heavy lifting in our definitional task.

It is an understatement to suggest that, "The lack of consistency in the usage of the terms *empathy* and *sympathy* has given rise to considerable confusion" (Eisenberg and Strayer 1987, 5). Take for example, these three summary definitions:

In empathy I act "*as if*" I were the other person. In sympathy I *am* the other person. (Wispé 1986, 318)

In our view, empathy involves... "feeling with" another Sympathy is "feeling for" someone (Eisenberg and Strayer 1987, 5, 6)

In sympathy I feel with; in empathy I feel in (Gauss 1973, 87)

Graciously enough, Gauss further enlightens us common language users that, "Popular thought often does not respect the difference, using empathy where sympathy is meant" (1973, 87). Counter to Gauss, I would assert that the popular approach is pulling sympathy and empathy apart into separate, if overlapping fields, and along with Eisenberg and Strayer, I would assert that, "In reality, there is no correct definition of empathy, just different definitions" (1987, 4), and lean with them in the sympathy-as-feeling-for and empathy-as-feeling-with direction.

In her attempt to establish both empathy and sympathy as “tactile encounters,” Edith Wyschogrod evolves a definition that touches on most important aspects of sympathy and empathy:

I take empathy to be the feeling-act through which a self grasps the affective act of another through an affective act of its own However, even if the other’s affect is occasioned by some object, my empathy does not depend upon knowledge of the object although such knowledge may increase or diminish the intensity of empathized affect. For example, I may empathize with X’s pain when I observe his distorted face but the intensity of my response is less when I know that he only has a toothache rather than Bell’s palsy. Sympathy is a feeling-act in which I + xⁿ others affectively apprehend a common object while, at the same time, we experience one another as immersed in similar feeling-acts occasioned by mutual participation in the common object. The feeling act is generally one of sorrow or some other troubling emotion, although it may shade off into a more diffuse affect, a sense of shared value, etc. Thus I am in sympathy with my sister over the loss of our father but I can also be in sympathy with members of my religious community in regard to our shared belief in a transcendent being

Both empathy and sympathy may generate action or find their terminus in feeling alone.
(Wyschogrod 1981, 27-9)

Sympathy is about the model’s misfortune

Wyschogrod adopts her particular definition in an attempt to cover two rather different ideas under the one description of sympathy. The first has to do with sense that we agree with someone, that we are “*in sympathy with them.*” Webster’s online definition similarly includes:

1 a : an affinity, association, or relationship between persons or things wherein whatever affects one similarly affects the other **b** : mutual or parallel susceptibility or a condition brought about by it **c** : unity or harmony in action or effect

2 a : inclination to think or feel alike : emotional or intellectual accord **b** : feeling of loyalty : tendency to favour or support <republican *sympathies*>

3 a : the act or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings or interests of another **b** : the feeling or mental state brought about by such sensitivity <have *sympathy* for the poor> (Online)

However, a second broad sense of “*feeling sympathy for someone*” has gained wide popular usage. This usage is closer to feeling sorry for someone, or having pity upon them. The difference between these two senses of sympathy is significant enough to make it useful to describe them as related but different types of affect which happen to pass under the same name. In this dissertation we will adopt sympathy of the second type only, and can therefore assume that it always involves the model’s misfortune.

Empathy also is often assumed to encompass only the distress of the model. Hoffman (2000), for example, assumes only this sort of empathy throughout his exploration of empathy and moral development, as do Batson *et al* (Batson, Fultz, and Schoenrade 1987a, 1987b) in looking at the differences between empathy and personal distress. In both these cases the authors are primarily interested in effects

which only entail responses to others' distress, though their formulations of empathy do not rule out the idea of a beholder's empathy with a model's more-positive situation.

Lauren Wispé, in a much cited article, explicitly broadens the definition: "*Empathy* ... refers to the attempt by one self-aware self to comprehend unjudgmentally the positive and negative experiences of another self" (Wispé 1986, 318). This description allows empathy to encompass points 1 and 3 from the Merriam-Webster definition of sympathy. I maintain this approach comes closer to approximating popular usages of sympathy, at least in phrases such as "I had sympathy for her," or "I sympathized with him." The phrase, "I was in sympathy with her," is growing rarer, except when a shared object is mentioned: "I was in sympathy with his views about the situation."

Sympathy, then, in this dissertation, will always entail a situation or state of the model which is beheld as distressing by the beholder, while empathy can encompass either good or bad perceived situations for the model. This choice best represents both a general consensus in technical usage and the ways in which common usage is pulling apart the semantic fields of these relative terms.

Sympathy entails feeling sorry for the model

The above distinction works well to separate specific types of affective responses. Hoffman, for example, gives no explicit definition of sympathy *per se*, but distinguishes between empathetic distress ("a more or less exact replication of the victim's actual or presumed feeling of distress") and sympathetic distress (the "[observer's desire] to help because they feel sorry for the victim") (Hoffman 2000, 87-8). Wispé similarly finds that, "*Sympathy* refers to the heightened awareness of the suffering of another person as something to be alleviated. There are two aspects to this definition of sympathy... heightened sensitivity to the emotions of the other person... [and] the urge to take whatever mitigating actions are necessary..."

(Wispé 1986, 318). There are two inter-related aspects of this approach. Temporally, in the order of experience, the first entails feeling sorry for the model, the second, and a desire to help.

We'll accept feeling sorry as by definition essential to sympathy. Vreeke and van der Mark specifically contrast this to empathy: "Sympathy is when you feel sorry for someone. Empathy is when you are feeling what they are feeling" (Vreeke and van der Mark 2003, 187). Clearly, empathy with a

model's positive state ought not of necessity lead to feeling sorry for the model. Under our definition, empathy with a negative state will also not necessarily lead to feeling sorry, though it may. Hoffman's definition distinguishes these two states developmentally even in the case of resonance with another's difficulties, where empathy precedes sympathy with its prosocial desires. This distinction narrows both definitions, and allows empathy to function separately of its potential outcomes at the level of desire, including the desire to help.

Sympathy involves the beholder's desire that the case were otherwise for the model
 D'Arms defines sympathy in, "a more restrictive sense as the name for the kind of sentiment that responds to perceived harms or threats to another person with concern for that person, and involves some degree of motivation to aid the person." Thus sympathy is like pity, but without the usual "connotations of condescension" (D'Arms 2000, 1477-8). Outright altruism need not be entailed for either empathy or sympathy, though we can take it that sympathy entails, on the part of the beholder, at least some level of prosocial desire that the situation were otherwise for the model, even if Hoffman's actual "desire to help" is not fully present. Again, empathy distinguishes itself in several important ways.

Clearly, if we are reasonably emotionally healthy, and someone we love has come into good for-

<p>Have I rejoiced with and for my neighbour in virtue or pleasure? Grieved with [her] in pain, for him in sin? Have I received his infirmities with pity, not anger? Have I thought or spoke unkindly of or to [her]? Have I revealed any evil of anyone, unless it was necessary to some particular good I had in view? Have I then done it with all the tenderness of phrase and manner consistent with that end? Have I anyway appeared to approve them that did otherwise? Has goodwill been, and appeared to be, the spring of all my actions toward others?</p>

tune, and we empathise with them, we don't wish their situation to change. However, it is also perfectly possible, as we have so far defined empathy, that we could resonate with a competitor's good fortune, and feel, not pleased, but envious, not least because we can empathically grasp what

that good fortune feels like. Indeed, empathy, as a capacity for resonance, need not entail any particular response or desire, so we could feel both pleased and envious at the same time, because the resonance and our subsequent desires are temporally subsequent and definitionally separate.

This approach runs counter to Stewart, whose definition in *A Preface to Empathy* links empathy to ethics via goodwill:

[Empathy] is felt to be ethical because it is grounded in feeling, presupposes goodwill, and strives for mutual understanding. It is seen as a sound psychological concept, because the process it stands for produces our most authentic and genuine personal experiences. It is aesthetic in its creative and selective activities. (Stewart 1956, 12)

Stewart further defines goodwill's effects: "To... ward off the dangers of fear and of hate, because they block knowledge, is to be well disposed towards you" (1956, 8). And he makes explicit the idea that where goodwill is absent, there is no empathy (Stewart 1956, 143 ff.).

This fundamental presupposition of goodwill represents a general tendency in the literature. Despite recognising empathy as an intuitive emotion and therefore potentially influencing even perception, and therefore any judgment, Arne Vetlesen, for example, takes empathy as by definition exclusive of hatred (1994, 221). Marcus notes, "The general theoretical expectation is that empathy will be positively related to prosocial and negatively related to antisocial behaviour. There are, however, research findings to the contrary." He suggests that, "theoretical and methodological advances are needed" (1987, 377). I'd suggest beginning these advances with a greater definitional clarity—the confusion may in part arise precisely due to the equation of empathy with definitionally necessary positive predispositions and behaviours.

Blair (2003) by contrast points out that on any number of measures the ability to represent others' states of mind ("theory of mind"—one aspect of empathy) appears to vary independently

From whence is it that the knave is generally so quick-sighted to those symptoms and operations of knavery, which often dupe an honest man of a much better understanding? There surely is no general sympathy among knaves; nor have they, like freemasons, any common sign of communication. In reality, it is only because they have the same thing in their heads, and their thoughts are turned the same way. (Fielding 1749/1992, 154)

relative to a propensity for antisocial behaviour, "defined as any action that impinges on the rights and welfare of others" (146). Thus, those with psychopathic tendencies can, "even use their theory of mind to achieve their antisocial goals, particularly in fraud or con cases" (157).

I will confess that at least some of my problem with the tendency to link empathy and prosocial affects and behaviours lies at the level of world-view. Whatever word I use for so fundamental a human propensity needs to allow for the possibility that fundamental human propensities can and in fact always do incline toward either good or evil outcomes, individually or corporately. However, such a distinction also yields gains in clarity and function for the concept of empathy as we wish to employ it.

Hence, I prefer to say that in empathy, we are describing a closely related complex of fundamental traits and resultant states, which may have any number of affective and behavioural outcomes: positive and negative, pro- and anti-social.

Sympathetic empathy

Lipps, too, distinguishes affective outcomes, granting for the same or similar stimuli the possibilities of “positive” or “negative” empathy in response. Positive empathy may be called “sympathetic empathy,” while negative empathy is experienced as “hostile” to me. But this experience “too is empathy,” and indeed its intensity depends upon the fact that this activity is like my own, is “somehow imputed to me.”

Lipps is describing our reaction to, for example, a mocking face. However, our reactions to beholding trauma also fit within this schema. Lipps explicitly points out the similar mechanisms for the two types of empathy and also points out that his positive empathy can be called sympathy, thereby muddying the distinction between them (Lipps 1905/1965, 408-410). It makes sense, once again, rather than retaining the tight connection implied by labelling both as empathy, to separate the initial empathy from its outcomes.

The question of a shared object

Wyschogrod’s definition (above) raises the question of a shared object for sympathy. If we are not attempting to encompass “being in sympathy” with someone, then her “ $1 + x^n$ ” calculation is not essential. The question still remains whether sympathy and empathy differ with respect to the beholder’s and model’s responses to a perceived object. This question points to the different routes by which we can enter either sympathy or empathy. If either can be induced by beholding the model’s affect or by knowing something about their situation, then this question only applies to the second route. This is the sort of empathy we develop in response to texts, and hence is critical to the latter parts of this dissertation.

In general, knowing the object of the model’s affect has a different impact upon empathy and sympathy. If we adopt Rogers and Wispé’s approaches to this type of conscious empathy, then the goal is the tuning of our empathy to the model’s affect. Contrary to Wyschogrod, then, knowing the object or

cause of the model's distress would neither increase nor decrease the impact, but rather form another aspect of unjudgmental comprehension.

Common usage of sympathy, by contrast, does reflect the impact of knowing the object. Thus we might say, "I know he is really upset about his bad haircut, and I have some sympathy for him, but "

Another way to say this would be that the beholder sympathizes, but cannot or will not empathize, with the model about the object of their distress. This failure to empathize then delimits the level of sympathy.

Sympathy is not dependent on knowing what the model is feeling

Another difference between empathy and sympathy arises at the level of affect. If sympathy involves feelings of sorrow and a wish that things were otherwise for the model, then I can feel sympathy for my schizophrenic neighbour, even when he is delighted at his good luck in seeing not one, but two, Hitlers at the mall today. Empathy on the other hand entails in some way grasping or comprehending his happiness. Clearly, however, these states of sympathy and empathy can coexist, and an empathic grasp of his exaltation might lead to some understanding sympathy about his unwillingness to take the medications which make him more stable.

There is a sense in which sympathy is a more conscious affect than empathy. Sympathy must have an appropriate object of some kind—in the case above, some way of knowing, direct or indirect, that the affect of the model, and his larger state are, in the opinion of the beholder, not identical. Sympathy's object may be only the facial or bodily expression of grief, or it may be knowledge about the model's state. Thus sympathy again does not entail being in a similar empathic state, but rather having an understanding of the other's state. By contrast, in the case just above, the beholder might empathically sense and in some way experience the model's affect of exhilaration, but without knowing its causes or object, might well rejoice with the model.

One can also feel empathy toward someone who has not labelled their own emotion. As Wispé points out, "These emotions and reactions are often unclearly understood by the other person... so one important aspect of this process is empathic accuracy" (Wispé 1986, 318). By Rogers' definition, too,

one's empathy, to be empathy, must to some extent striving toward accuracy. The beholder's empathy can then lead to therapeutic recognitions for the model.

Twenty years ago, Lauren Wispé titled an article "The distinction between sympathy and empathy: To call forth a concept a word is needed" (1986). Despite the sometimes contradictory trends in technical literature, the article maintains that empathy and sympathy can be distinguished with respect to their historical roots, research paradigms, and relevant theorizing. Technical discussions of empathy, since then have become more elaborate, cautious, and sophisticated, and the term in common usage has also travelled some distance from its origins. On the whole, there is an inclination in the literature towards what Vreeke and van der Mark summarize as, "Sympathy is when you feel sorry for someone. Empathy is when you are feeling what they are feeling" (2003, 187). This distinction, which may arise more from popular language than otherwise, seems to be not just calling forth the concept of empathy, but to be pulling the two terms into separate if overlapping but orbits. Uses of sympathy, in particular, can lie still in a sort of middle ground, implying a level of understanding, for example of my neighbour, without thereby entailing empathy in its fullest sort of sense.

Empathy as "feeling with" the model and sympathy as "feeling for" the model, provide a distinction close enough to much popular usage and adequate to our task, so long as we hold in mind the nuances above, and especially the impossibility of one person fully feeling what another is feeling. Nonetheless, I intend to hold on to at least some meaning for the ideas of similarities of states between people, so my stance perhaps approaches that of Julie Salverson when she summarizes Levinas's "absolute alterity": "In other words, whatever I think I understand, there remains something beyond my ability to know, to sense, to imagine, something that will surprise me and which comes from outside myself. It is my ethical obligation to remain vigilant, ready to receive that *something* and to put myself at its service" (2001, 3).

OTHER SIMILAR CONCEPTS

There exists a tendency to link empathy not just to pro-social affects, but to outright altruistic behaviour (Batson, Fultz, and Schoenrade 1987b, 21-22). Certainly, there are some intriguing connections between

the two. True other-focussed empathy, for example leads to action-focussed altruistic motivation, even when no one else knows or will know about the beholder's altruistic behaviour (Fultz et al. 1986, 763). While empathy can lead to altruism, however, merging the two, or only focussing on the positive aspects of empathy, leaves us with an unlabelled residue of experiences where feeling empathy leads to negative or off-putting emotions, or where a person is very astute at reading other's states, but misuses these skills.

For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:.... Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. (Romans 12:4-5, 21 RSV)

Empathy must be distinguished from personal distress, as well. Batson, who has researched this distinction extensively, however, aligns

personal distress and empathy as competing states, and then assesses their outcomes in terms of altruism (Batson, Fultz, and Schoenrade 1987b, 1987a; Batson and Shaw 1991). Empathy thus entails positive or pro-social states. Hoffman instead discusses the fact that empathy in its early forms leads to personal empathic distress, and only later to sympathetic distress and altruistic feelings. Once beholders have reached that stage, "They continue to respond in a partly egoistic manner—to feel uncomfortable and highly distressed themselves—but they also experience a feeling of compassion or what I call sympathetic distress for the victim, along with a conscious desire to help" (2000, 87-88). To maintain this sort of developmental clarity, a better approach is ours, which frees empathy from its affective outcomes, one that treats empathy itself as "in its essence, neither an egoistic nor other-oriented response" (Eisenberg and Strayer 1987, 7).

Emotional contagion is "an involuntary 'catching' of another's emotions, induced somehow by the model's expressive behaviour (D'Arms 2000, 1483), which seems to lead to babies in nurseries all crying at the same time, or to the instantaneous nature of some mob violence. As such, it is best treated under our schema as a category of rudimentary empathy.

Mimicry, role-taking, and perspective taking, while each related to empathy, can all be distinguished from empathy by their lack of emphasis on affective resonance. Gauss suggests that the "good actor, knowing that one does not project an emotional state to an audience merely by imitating the actions of one in that state, 'lives' his part, directly experiencing states of feeling" (1973, 87). However, even if

empathy can enhance role taking, they are not identical, and one can mimic or adopt a role without necessarily assuming or approximating the affect of the model. Perspective taking is closer to empathy, than mimicry or role-taking but, "I can see her perspective," suggests a more cognitive, fact-oriented approach, than "I empathize with her." When conceptually separated from each other, empathy and perspective-taking demonstrate interesting interactions. For example, perspective taking leads to greater empathy, but not to greater personal distress (Batson, Fultz, and Schoenrade 1987a, 172-3).

Identification and projection are closer still to empathy, and aspects of empathy certainly can lead to either. Indeed, as already described, the loss of the *as if* condition during empathy can lead the beholder to identify with the model, and this might serve as a definition for identification: the belief that the beholder has become, or almost become, the model. Vetlesen would suggest that the "essence of empathy lies in one subject's *retaining* rather than abandoning his or her own standpoint and identity" (Vetlesen 1994, 204). Rather than define identity as a different form of empathy, or even as states which are mutually exclusive, they are better held as separate states, wherein the one, empathy, can lead to the other, identification. Projection, too, used in the sense of Vischer's projection of oneself into an object, is better seen as a result, rather than empathy itself. There is related

Benedick on being called "a very dull fool" whose "gift is in devising impossible slanders": "It is the base (though bitter) disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person and so gives me out." (*Much Ado About Nothing* 2, 1)

common usage of projection, however, which is almost the opposite of the common usage of empathy, namely that of the beholder projecting an internal state onto the model, and then reading it back as the model's own. This sort of projection and true empathy in response to someone else's state are often intermixed in one and the same interchange. In both common and psychological usage, these terms overlap to such an extent that in certain circumstances, empathy, identification, and projection are used interchangeably.

Metaphoric Definitions

The fundamentally fluid and metaphorical nature of language makes such overlap inevitable. Empathy,

I would like to hear your life as *you* heard it, coming at you, instead of hearing it as I do, a sober sound of expectations reduced, desires blunted, hopes deferred or abandoned, chances lost, defeats accepted, griefs borne... I would like to hear it as it sounded while it was passing. (*Angle of Repose*, Stegner 1992, 25)

like any complex term, has attracted to itself certain more-overt metaphors, especially those of mirrors and resonance. In addition, one theorist has proposed struc-

tural affinities between empathy and touch.

TOUCH

Philosopher Edith Wyschogrod's discussion of empathy never mentions metaphor, but is instead a complex philosophical discourse asserting that, "Since touch is the paradigmatic sense for bringing what is felt into proximity with feeling, structural affinities between touch and [empathy and sympathy] can be shown" (Wyschogrod 1981, 21). Nonetheless, I read her work as an attempt to bring the ways we use empathy and the ways we use touch into alignment with one another—a metaphorical approach to the language of touch and empathy—and her thoughts about proximity, vulnerability, and the nature of touch can be mentioned in our context without undue violence to her train of thought. Wyschogrod's differentiation between empathy and sympathy has been discussed above. Her points regarding touch apply to both equally, and as mentioned above, my view of empathy essentially combines her empathy and sympathy, so I'll discuss only empathy below.

Wyschogrod points out that visual objects and auditory sensations are both apprehended as occurring at a distance from their objects or sources, while touch implies not only proximity but contact. In general, "In intersubjective encounter [touch] is involved in caress and sexual arousal, as well as in aggression, slapping, punching etc" (Wyschogrod 1981, 39). While it is true that in certain contexts, such as a doctor's examination of a patient, "tactility is deployed in the manner of seeing rather than the converse," even in these acts, touch still necessitates the drawing near, the contact, "the proximity of feeling to what is felt" (Wyschogrod 1981, 41, 42 (note)). Our language around empathic encounter reflects a sense of proximity when we "feel" for or with another, when we are "touched" by another's situation (Wyschogrod 1981, 41).

I'd agree with Wyschogrod that proximity certainly does seem of the metaphorical essence of empathy. In the intimate encounter with another and in our apprehension of their state, however acquired, we do indeed seem to draw near to them. The distance between us, emotional, psychic, seems to diminish. Of course this experience can go further, towards Vischer's sense that empathy involves actual projection into the object of our empathy. In response, Roger's might well embrace Wyschogrod's choice of metaphor, since touch implies not only contact, but also the limits of the self. Wyschogrod points out this limitation, noting, after Stein, that "The body is that which, though always obstinately 'here,' places what is other than itself always, and with equal obstinacy, 'there' (Wyschogrod 1981, 38). We might go farther with this metaphor, and suggest that the kinds of touch, such as surgery, which move beyond the surface, which fail thereby to observe Roger's *as if*, are all, even if well intentioned, invasive, and do necessary violence. Examples of this invasive type of empathy are not hard to find, with a paradigmatic case being a parent using her superior empathic skill to invade and attempt to control the inner life of her child, in an exploitation of her child's vulnerability.

If people would but leave children to themselves; if teachers would cease to bully them; if parents would not insist upon directing their thoughts, and dominating their feelings—those feelings and thought which are a mystery to all (... and how far more beautiful and sacred are the thoughts of the poor lad or girl whom you govern likely to be, than those of the dull and world-corrupted person who rules him?) —... small harm would accrue... (Thackeray 1848/1968, 79).

Yet this vulnerability cannot be altogether avoided for it is another key aspect of the tactility of empathy. A failure to accommodate vulnerability is, for Wyschogrod, the key problem with Nietzsche's *ressentiment* approach to pity. His approach, too has its roots in a particular sense, in the "clinging to visual consciousness" which is the hallmark of Nietzsche's vitalism (Wyschogrod 1981, 29-30). While Nietzsche embraces death itself, he otherwise cordons off "phenomena of vulnerability—sensitivity to temperature, fatigue, exhaustion, sleep," treating them not as aspects of the body, but "metaphysically in the manner of non-being." On this account, vulnerability, whether of the body, or of empathy, is an aspect not of life, but of non-being, or perhaps of "decaying life" (Wyschogrod 1981, 30-31). In contrast, "since empathy and sympathy are phenomena of proximity, they can only be understood as feeling-acts of a tactile rather than a visual subject" (Wyschogrod 1981, 32).

The vulnerability Wyschogrod notes is indeed more like that of touch; empathy implies that we can be genuinely affected, saddened, grieved, “touched” by those with whom we empathise. I would go further and point out that we make ourselves vulnerable in other touch-like ways. When I am empathising with another, I am “reaching out” to the other “with my guard down.” If the other chooses at that point to “lash out,” I can easily be very hurt. When this happens, it feels like nothing so much as “being punched in the stomach.” Indeed, we are in precisely this way more vulnerable in empathy than in sympathy, which may help lead to the tendency of sympathy to shade into a species of condescending pity.

In these visions of proximity and vulnerability, it would be easy to focus on touch as a function, a sense, especially of the hand, reaching out, touching, caressing, punching. Wyschogrod’s sense, however, is not touch narrowly conceived, but rather the idea of touch as a function of the entire body. She wins through to this point after a complicated engagement with various philosophies of the senses, including those of Aristotle, Berkeley, and Condillac. She points out that most theories attempt to interpret touch along the lines of the other senses. These various theories typically begin with and therefore theoretically embody the distance inherent in senses such as hearing and sight. They must then particularize and make exceptions for touch within their schema. Further, within these theories, “each sense is a pathway providing information about the world which is then subsequently synthesized” (Wyschogrod 1981, 38).

Both approaches generate serious inconsistencies which Wyschogrod suggests we can read “... as ‘breaks’ or ‘ruptures’ within an interpretive scheme... which uncover the unique spatio-temporal structure of the haptic field from which empathy and sympathy emerge” (Wyschogrod 1981, 32).

For the body as a whole is a potential haptic field While all sensing depends upon the kinaesthesia, [the] universal element of sensing is always apprehensible to touch since touch is not only cutaneous receptivity of heat and cold, pressure, surface quality, etc., but is inseparable from kinaesthesia as such If we are right, if the primordial manner of being of the lived body is to be understood as tactile, then tactility cannot be included under a generic theory of sense but provides its ground. Thus the manner in which touch yields the world is the most primordial manner of our apprehension of it. (Wyschogrod 1981, 39)

Rather than accommodating tactility within a schema based on other senses, she has inverted the attempt and made touch the ground for all sensation, including even kinaesthesia, the sense of movement. This vision of touch underlies her linking of empathy to tactility. Wyschogrod herself seems to come

close to suggesting not only the “structural alignment” of terms, but rather the actual grounding of the experience of empathy in the experience of tactility: “This is not to suggest that empathy and sympathy are conscious imitations of tactile encounter, but that tactile encounter when lived at a pre-reflective level, is vulnerability to the other” (Wyschogrod 1981, 41). And while she does not elaborate in this way, this sort of touch clearly provides for a fuller vision of empathy as the engagement of our entire being.

If so, it seems that the whole-person sort of empathy which we often experience tends toward Wyschogrod’s encompassing view of touch, yet the ways in which touch retains and even reinforces our limits sounds like Rogers’ *as if* sort of empathy. When we lose our “sense of distance” and seem to almost become one with the other person, we have crossed out of *as if* empathy into a fusion for which

<p>I'd love to gain complete control of you Handle even the heart and soul of you ("All of You", Porter 1995)</p>

touch is not the best metaphor. And empathy which is being wielded clinically, by say a con man, can be described in terms of touch used more like sight.

Wyschogrod locates the tendency to ascribe closer relationships between empathy and other senses, especially sight and hearing, to the confused history of the philosophies of the senses mentioned above. While there may be something to this, I would also suggest that we most often, and most intensely, apprehend the person with whom we are empathising through sight and hearing. It is therefore quite natural to construct metaphors such as those of mirrors and music which involve these senses, even if, at the cognitive level, this may seem like a confusion between metaphorical aptness and sensory medium. Wyschogrod’s innovation is to overcome the ease of connection to these more obvious, and often more dominant, senses, in proposing touch instead.

While she doesn’t precisely summarize in this way, by the time she is done, Wyschogrod’s vision of empathy links it to a sense which is not only that of our fingertips, or even of our entire skin surface, but of our limits, location, and movement. In empathy, for her especially, we indeed be-hold the model. I’d like to perform a little cognitive metaphorical shift of my own here, and suggest that Wyschogrod’s whole-body version of touch as the ground for other sensations fits well with the views of empathy we take up in the next section of this theses, wherein the other person’s body is seen to activate the parts of

our brain associated with our own body. As we'll see, this intimate whole-body mapping of one body within another is treated as the root of all empathy.

Her discussions of proximity and distance also point toward the recurring concept of space in relationships, of being in an affective or relational sense closer to someone or farther from them, of experiencing a moment of closeness or distance. Echoes of this locational sense occur in the discussions of empathy as far back as Lipps, where the empathic object of enjoyment stands "opposite me" and where the "ground" of the enjoyment occupies a "middle position between the object of aesthetic enjoyment and the enjoyment itself" (1903/1979, 371). The many points at which Vischer, Lipps, and others discuss the "loss of self" in empathy, can also play in two quite different ways: as if we are a collocation which can in some way be divided and thereby lose a piece called the self, or as if we are in some way a self which can become lost, losing its bearings in inter-relational space when we forget the *as if*. Within this metaphorical descriptive framework, we can also meaningfully discuss, as one of my committee members does, the inter-spatial relationship between beholder and model. Or we can construct the space between them as the active and changeable location of relationship and communication.

MIRRORS

Mirrors and reflections appear routinely in the literature around empathy. They often serve to emphasize the way in which in empathy we at least in part discover the image of ourselves which we are projecting forth. A mirror features prominently in Case Study I below, and its use invokes all the meanings explored above. The image of a mirror manages to encompass, in the shorthand of good metaphor, complexities which otherwise require significant explanation.

For Lacan, the mirror stage is "a particular case of the function of the imago, which is to establish a relationship between the organism and its reality" (1977, 4). At the onset of the mirror stage, at about six months, the infant has a conflict between the image of itself as whole, and the experience of itself as a "fragmented body," which leads to an alienation which changes its nature as we age, but is never resolved.

The metaphor of the mirror embodies a way of conceptualizing the discomfort that results from assuming that the beholder simply replicates the affective experience of the model. Vischer's aesthetics of empathy, for example portrays the role of empathy in the creation of art. The artist, living the highest level of empathy, releases himself empathically to "the pleasure of pure observation." He thereby yields

himself to a process in which art becomes “as much purely subjective as it is purely objective.” The artist is not consciously aware of this process. Indeed, “it is truly the essence of artistic ideality not to be conceptually aware of itself but to mirror itself in an individual object” which is the artistic result (1873/1993, 116-17). Gauss similarly cites Plato, “who says of the beloved that ‘his lover is the mirror in whom he is beholding himself, but he is not aware of it’” (1973, 87).

Rogers’ experience with the imagery is not just complex but traumatizing. In attempting to phrase the process of therapeutic empathy, he heeded a social worker’s suggestion that “the best response was to ‘reflect’ these feelings back to the client.” But “‘reflect’ [became] in time a word which made me cringe” (Rogers 1975, 2), because this phrasing facilitated the extreme oversimplification of his views, which in turn led him to avoid writing about empathy. Further, as he researched empathy, he discovered that, “listening to feelings and ‘reflecting’ them was a vastly complex process” (Rogers 1975, 3).

He might well have preferred Stewart’s complex portrayal of this process of reflection:

Personal knowing is a process which involves two or more persons. I see myself in you and thus learn better to know myself, for you have provided perspective and object in which I can mirror many of my traits, but also I note where my likeness to you fades, and something foreign presents itself. The foreign element sharpens the outline both of my identity and of yours. (Stewart 1956, 7)

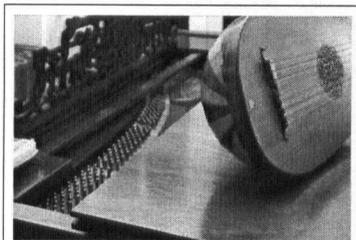
This more intricate formulation moves beyond the mere reflected replication of the beholder’s image toward the idea that the model as mirror influences my own perception of myself. The sharpening of outlines which results rings of both Roger’s *as if* and of Wyschogrod’s recognitions about touch and empathy (above).

A final repeated use of mirror bears mention here. When the part of the brain which now appears central to our replication of others’ physical experience—a capacity considered rudimentary to empathy—was discovered, the crucial neurons were labelled “mirror neurons.” These neurons fire when a lover beholds the one she loves receiving an uncomfortable burning sensation applied to his arm. They facilitate the process whereby the arm section of her own brain lights up, albeit without lighting up the area which would generate genuine pain (Singer et al. 2004). The mirror metaphor here acquires a new

depth as the image is of one lover beholding another; the mirror is within the beholder's mind and the image is of the lover.

MUSICAL RESONANCE

The uses of musical resonance reinforce certain ideas around empathy which seem misconstrued. Gauss, for example, suggests that, "In popular usage the idea refers to the emotional resonance between two people, when, like strings tuned to the same frequency, each responds in perfect sympathy to the other and each reinforces the responses of the other" (Gauss 1973, 85). I believe this is overstating what most common language users would assert about empathy. Nevertheless, the metaphor does seem to catch something of what we feel when we experience empathy, a thrumming resonance indeed.



Norah's Lute and Piano

When my friend Norah's piano was being tuned one day, we noticed that her lute's strings resonated even when the note on the piano was well below any the lute was capable of. Within the musical universe, this better metaphor is that of overtones and undertones, by which an instrument incapable of replicating a particular frequency (pitch), can nevertheless, resonate with pitches sharing certain harmonic structures. Interestingly, when I have asked several Chinese speakers about empathy, I have received two quite different translations. The first consists of the two characters which in Chinese mean not the replication of pitch, but harmonic resonance.

Harmonic resonance, unlike pitch replication, suggests appropriate differentiation between the two instruments, between model and beholder, while retaining a sense that some accuracy is required. This Chinese translation aligns with the forms of empathy which arise intuitively or non-cognitively.

THE REASONING HEART

The second Chinese translation consists of three characters: same or one, reason, and heart. In Chinese when one empathises, one's heart reasons the same as another's. Reason here is the same character used for intellectual reasoning. When I asked a

[Adam] had too little fellow-feeling with the weakness that errs in spite of foreseen consequences... . And there is but one way in which a strong determined soul can learn it—by getting his heart-strings bound round the weak and erring, so that he must share not only the outward consequence of their error, but their inward suffering. (Eliot 1961)

Cantonese first-language acquaintance about heart, I was told that the Chinese metaphorical heart is not as feeling-oriented as ours, yet this usage still implies emotion or feeling, not just mentation. When, *without* mentioning the word empathy, I sought help from Chinese friends about these characters, I received this email:

---Original Message---

Sent: February 18, 2004 9:52 PM

To: Karen Cooper

Subject: Re: characters

Hi,

I am Nianhua Feng, the pronunciation of your characters is tong li xin, and the meaning is using your heart to understand other people's. Sometimes, the conflicts among the people are caused by misunderstanding, or your stubbornly persisting in your own opinions. It is a piece of admonition that when you contact with other people you should image that what would you do when an accident happened while under the same site, the same time and you were the person concerned?

In all, you should care about your parents, your children, your friends even the strangers you meet from the their perspectives. You should pay attention to what they care about! I am sorry I can't explain it in a word, if you are still interested in it, we can discuss it next week.

Best wishes!

Sincerely

Nianhua

When I met with Nianhua the following week, I told him there *was* a word, since allowing for Nianhua's recent arrival here in Canada and consequent difficulties with English, this translation seems very close to the more conscious analogical forms of empathy we've used, where efforts toward understanding another's situation can lead to empathy for them, and suggests that not only in English but at least across this one other culture there is a phenomenon worthy of particular label, whose implications ring very like those of empathy in our own.

My Approach

Rather than summarize or re-list these conclusions, I'll follow the example of Rogers (1975), D'Arms (2000), and Wispé (1986), each of whom needed not sentences or paragraphs, but pages, to define empathy. That said, a few remaining points present themselves. Empathy, not least because it encompasses

experiences which range from the unconscious and un-willed to the deliberately analogical, can appear too diffuse a term to be useful. But as we've seen above, certain aspects link the various manifestations.

One such aspect is the focus on some alignment, resonance, or relative accuracy in the interchange between beholder and model. But what if the beholder is completely wrong? Since the essence of empathy is the beholder's sense of or desire for resonance, and since absolute accuracy is impossible, it works well to describe empathy as on a continuum, from wholly mistaken, to relatively accurate. If so we shouldn't look for a new label, but, like D'Arms, treat mistaken empathy as empathy nonetheless (2000, 1480-1).

Freeing empathy from necessary affective and behavioural outcomes allows us to focus upon core aspects of empathy which remain remarkably consistent throughout various descriptions. Empathy then becomes a complex "knife edge" state which can lead to various affective, motivational and active outcomes. At this edge between empathy and its outcomes, the ethical questions which interest me in this dissertation gain their purchase.

These two moves also allow us to encompass both the affective and cognitive sides of empathy. As Håkansson summarizes, "Although some researchers have historically emphasized affect and others cognition, the term empathy has always conveyed the idea of knowing about the awareness of another, a capacity by which one person obtains knowledge of the subjective side of another person" (2003, 2). We can thereby also align a spectrum of related experiences from infant physiological contagion through affective emotional empathy to Rogers' or Stewarts' adult, intimate, interactive, boundary respecting, "in their shoes" empathy. These aspects of empathy build upon one another, with the third, for which we often commonly use the term, depending upon the first two.

"I was thinking about you guys yesterday, 'cuz I been here three times before, and I think I understand a little bit about how you feel about some things. It's none of my *business* how you feel about some other things, and I don't *give* a damn about how you feel about some other things. But anyway, I tried to put myself in your place, and I believe this is the way that I would feel about San Quentin." (Cash 1969)

Finally, under the schema above we can discuss not just infant and adult empathy, but immature and mature forms and applications of empathy. If mature suggests applications more likely

to be attained with age and practice, then mature uses of empathy distinguish themselves by the combina-

tion of drawing near, even to the point of contact, without any breach of integument. And in this realm Stewart's approach above reminds us that a highly complex version of knowing and being known emerges. Such mature empathy "is indeed as much an art to be cultivated as it is the basis of inference" (Stewart 1956, 7), an activity bringing together a significant number of our abilities, engaging our intuition, our physiological capacity for mimicry, our memory, and moving us thereby into a position for conscious inference and analogy. When viewed in this way, the tendency of empathy to split into cognitive/chosen and unconscious/unchosen aspects points toward a basic possibility—that it is neither the unwilling emotion nor the cognitive and highly structured choice of perspective, but rather precisely empathy's merging of both which marks it out.

For our purposes, which involve adults and the ways empathy gets into and out of texts, this approach is more than adequate. We can at least acknowledge that for the beholder, this sense of coming to know something of the model does indeed seem of the essence of their experience of empathy. We can move forward into the first section of this dissertation to explore other more interactive ways in which this idea becomes meaningful.

CASE STUDY I: THESE WORDS OF LONG LOVE

These Words of Long Love: Four Poems

After He Has Gone

I've been remembering the two of them
the summer I first began to know them
the aura of their physical love
like a visible hum
as if they had somehow shaped her body
between them over all their years
not just the silvery traces
of their children's long gestation
threading down her abdomen
but even minute details
the weight and angle of her breasts
and the altered way her bare arm
swept her hand through the air,
adding shape to her words
when he was near.
"I am fifty-two," she said today, gesturing downward,
"What will this body be in a few years?"
And I could see, as if in her mirror,
that in this moment she has become
only the empty purse of skin below her navel
only the breasts that have begun to sag
as if her form still held
each of the bodies she was with him
only so long as he was near.

Duane and Anne

He says, "I cannot look
into her eyes and this is hard,
but harder for her than for me."
Though his sight has gone,
not hers, though she looks at him
as she speaks, she says,
"We will not see each other again."
And I can hear her not seeing him.
She is blind with his not seeing.
She would be deaf with his not hearing.
She can see him not seeing her
as she speaks.

Bob's Janey

I

It's been years since she opened it
but like any woman she's always
reaching reaching for her purse.

She can't remember stalking the house
for hours after leaving it behind at a party
or in the lady's room at church.

But she does know she's a lady, and though
it's long since she ceased to even say
her children's names, a lady carries a purse.

II

He just can't believe she can't remember,
so he tells her for at least the fifth time,
"You don't need that bag at the party tonight."

As long as she wants her purse, she might
still be his Janey; if only she might
remember, she is, for him, still here.

Biblical Translation

Suddenly, after 26 years, your rapt face,
 in pause a scant hands-breadth from my own
 is for the first time a saint
 a script carved in ivory
 its eyes closed and a slight hieratic smile
 the autumn afternoon light translucing
 the bridge of the nose, the tip of an ear.
 In this moment before you enter me
 first the English "hovering"
 then the Hebrew and the Greek
 "merachéfet" "epephéreto"
 float like banners from left to right across
 the sky of my mind: hovering
 of the *rúach elohím*
 (that alien continuous tense)
 first breath of God
 over the face of the deep—
 and in the scant moment
 before that spirit breathed
 (a reflexive Aegean voice)
 into Mary's womb the light
 that would remake the world.

like a visible hum
 as if they had somehow shaped her body
 between them over all their years
 not just the silvery traces
 of their children's long habitation
 threading down her abdomen
 but even minute details
 the weight and angle of her breasts
 and the altered way her bare arm
 swept her hand through the air,
 adding shape to her words
 when he was near.
 "I am fifty-two," she said today, gesturing downward,
 "What will this body be in a few years?"
 And I could see, as if in her mirror,
 that in this moment she has become
 only the empty purse of skin below her navel
 only the breasts that have begun to sag
 as if her form still held
 each of the bodies she was with him
 only so long as he was near.

Meanwhile, I was working on all four of the poems, first by myself, and then with a few poets
 and my writers' group. Eventually I also read them to the members of my book club, none of whom were
 divorced, and all of whom were in long marriages. "After He Has Gone" provoked the greatest comment

This book club, called by one son "The Bitter Middle-Aged Ladies," has met for years to drink wine, bitch about our church,
 and read books with some kind of spiritual import.

from the women, and the comments indicated a
 strong sense of identification. "That's exactly

how it is!" said Holly.

A few days prior to the "Poetry Café" Katherine decided she might like to come, since several of
 her friends were going to read. Again, I brought the poem to her house, where she asked me to read it
 aloud. This I did with great anxiety. While the day in question had clearly been a particularly low one
 for her, and while she clearly was on the whole doing well, I was terribly anxious that this poem would
 cause her pain. I was also experiencing my routine anxiety at showing my work to another poet whose
 work I respected, though in some incoherent way this reaction seemed contradictory or inappropriate to
 my concern for her. It was a vicious combination of fears and my heart rate doubled as I began to read.

My reading was anything but fluid, and at the end, there was a distinct pause. Then Katherine said, with great definition, “I don’t identify with that at all. For one thing, I have no stretch marks!” There it was, the hard kernel of reality: she of the long, slim, and elegant frame had no stretch marks, whereas I, larger—but also the bearer of ten-pound-nine-ounce behemoths—had seersucker skin well *above* my navel. My internal reaction couldn’t have been more mixed. I felt at one and the same time quite distressingly disappointed, and very relieved. Despite my consciousness of the *as if*, the proper division between Katherine’s experience and my apprehension of it, there had been such a strong sense of identity and empathy during the original conversation that for a moment I couldn’t quite sense how I had “gotten it wrong.” The stretch marks had been there from the very beginning, one of the strongest initial impressions. Within a fleeting moment more, I regained a sense of writerly reality, namely the recognition that what I had written was an expression of how this situation might have felt *to me*. Also a sense that beyond the semantic content of her words, I had also apprehended in Katherine’s countenance, in her voice, certain emotions, and that I had then constructed—both instantly and later in the poem—certain aspects of my responses such that they might have led me into the physical state I was apprehending as being Katherine’s.

In the end we discussed ways in which that day had been a single moment in her experience. At this point, reading the poem, it was only a memory, not how she was feeling at all this particular day. She remembered the statement which had sparked the poem, but even had it been possible for me somehow to replicate the moment perfectly, it was transient, beyond confirmation, for either one of us. We moved then to the naiveté of believing that empathy could ever be a direct representation of someone else’s reality, however immediate and congruent the emotions might seem as we responded to another person’s situation. “No,” she said thoughtfully, “It’s not a replication; it’s a resonance.”

And I could see that ~~that she was~~ in this moment she was only what she sees in the mirror.

About a year later, after writing a first draft of this chapter, and as I was editing it for the dissertation, I realized I had a number of questions about Katherine’s reaction to the poem. My relational anxiety

and my conflicted emotions had prevented me from discovering whether she had identified with the poem at all. I asked her if she would speak with me about it. We got together, in my kitchen this time. It turned out that Katherine thought I wanted her to edit the poem, as she has so much of my work. When she heard what I wanted, she offered to give me “first a personal and then a critical answer.”

As happens in conversations, the neat division between the two fell apart almost instantly, and the criticism flowed naturally from the rest. Katherine remembered making the comment about the stretch marks, but wanted to know, “Did I really say this?” about the “What will this body be...” question. She didn’t really doubt it, but rather could not remember at this length of time. She paused, and re-read the poem, and then said, “But it’s true, you know. No one I sleep with now could know that body, the one that’s gone.”

She likewise couldn’t remember her state in detail from that day, but during the conversation mentioned the many ways she identified with the poem now. “I love this image of the shaping of our bodies; it’s very evocative.” Then she became a little teary: “It’s cellular. On a cellular level, he holds my body in his skin, and I hold his. I can’t remember how long it is before all of your cells change, but I bet that’s how long it takes.” I mentioned how physically affectionate they had been with one another. “Yes,” she said, “whenever we were near each other, we were touching. In fact, it’s taken me all this time to stop reaching out.”

“You mean literally... physically... reaching.”

“Yes, with my hand,” she said, reaching her hand out as if to touch someone. “I’ve kept reaching out for him until very recently.”

Again re-reading, she made some suggestions about line breaks and punctuation, and pointed out the part about the “empty purse.” “When you first wrote this, I didn’t understand. But now I do. It’s menopause. Just in the last year, it’s happened. And it doesn’t help to hold in my tummy. Not at all!”

I offered her the chance to choose her own alias for this work, or even to use her own name, but she declined the latter offer. “Vanity,” we both agreed, “Pure vanity,” and laughed. So we talked, empathising about menopause: which parts of our bodies we can’t seem to get over losing. I then mentioned,

with approval, several men we both knew were staying faithful to their aging menopausal wives. About the other men our age we knew who seemed to be chasing younger women, Katherine opined, “Maybe they can’t help it. Maybe it’s evolutionary: Once we can’t breed, our bodies betray us.” It was a wild image—on behalf of the species, my body signalling, whether I consciously want it to or not, that I can’t have babies, to some man who, whether he consciously wants babies or not, is driven nonetheless to find a younger body with which to breed. Whether I believe it or not, whether it could ever be established scientifically or not, and regardless of any bitterness or envy, this statement, in its attempt to non-judgmentally understand, was in that conversation a final act of empathy.

ROBERT VISCHER, THEODOR LIPPS, KAREN COOPER: A SHARED NAÏVETÉ?

I have already discussed certain aspects of Robert Vischer’s and Theodor Lipps’ work on empathy as relevant to questions of reading and definition for this dissertation. It is also worth applying certain other aspects of Vischer’s and Lipps’ specific uses of the term to this poem in some detail, both because the word empathy came into English from Vischer, via Lipps (via Titchener) and because the current understandings of empathy still have much in common with their particular approach. The works of Vischer and Lipps are apt to this dissertation in at least four broad areas: the nature of involuntary empathy, questions around the loss of self in empathy, empathy with trauma, and the work of empathy in the artist’s task. Further, as we’ve discussed above, Vischer and Lipps share a fundamental similarity in much of their approach to our topic. They can therefore, with occasional digressions and clarifications, address together the poem at hand.

Even the use of words like naïve and development, however, project an attitude of superiority which is not mine, and which I don’t particularly want to propagate. Indeed, at the level of my own reading and writing I am, to quote my supervisor, enacting an empathetic negotiation between a number of poles. So while the history of empathy is full of developments, these are usually the developments of a news story, not the development from lesser to greater, or from worse to better. And while I will invoke the idea of maturity in the development of empathy, I do not inherently view the child or her views with disdain.

In my reactions to Katherine, and in particular to the sense that I had somehow “gotten it wrong,” I betrayed an attitude toward the question of empathy which can be labelled as naïve from both literary-theoretical and scientific viewpoints. Vischer and

Lipps (despite his greater sophistication in some ways) both display a similar naïveté, particularly with respect to concepts such as the loss of self and inner imitation. Even so, the analogy in application is not

perfect. While the subject of this work of art is a human, the work in question is a poem, rather than a sculpture or a painting. And while architecture and music have also been mentioned in discussions leading to *Einführung*, especially by Schopenhauer, broadening its application considerably, the thinkers above have not extended these discussions to my own art of words. Further, the image here is neither an ideal form of pure beauty nor one of massive public tragedy, but rather a more mixed view of a woman undergoing an intimate trauma.

Where the Self is Lost

As already discussed in the introduction, Lipps and Vischer can be described as relatively scientific, particularly for their times. Nonetheless there is a substantial ambiguity in the terms and phrases they use in describing the action of empathy, especially with respect to issues of self or subject (our beholder), and other or object (our model). Vischer asserts in several ways that the relevant drive is one towards the “full and complete union” of subject and object. He reserves this totality of merger for human-to-human interactions, where we can achieve a “doubling of self” (Vischer 1873/1993, 106). Yet even in interactions with the inanimate:

I project my own life into the lifeless form, just as I quite justifiably do with another living person. Only ostensibly do I keep my own identity although the object remains distinct. I seem merely to adapt and attach myself to it as one hand clasps another, and yet I am mysteriously transplanted and magically transformed into this Other. (Vischer 1873/1993, 104)

Vischer here thoroughly denies any of Wyschogrod’s sense of the limits of touch, and with it Rogers’ *as if* clause.

Lipps, too, obscures the distinctions, so much so that Rader can summarize Lipps as declaring, “the disappearance of the two-fold consciousness of self and object” (Rader 1979, 334). As will be seen in the summary to this section, where we discuss the role of conscious and unconscious action, this is not quite a subtle enough description of Lipps’ position. Still, Lipps’ descriptions retain some ambiguity.

That ambiguity, for both Vischer and Lipps emerges especially clearly in their use of locational references and terms. In his positive reaction to *Leben des Traums* (The Life of the Dream), by Karl Albert Scherner (1861), Vischer approvingly notes that

Here it was shown how the body, in responding to certain stimuli in dreams, objectifies itself in spatial forms. Thus it unconsciously projects its own bodily form—and with this also the soul—into the form of the object. From this I derived the notion that I call “empathy” [*Einfühlung*]. (1873/1993, 92)

“Here it was shown” declares these ideas as not just a summary of Scherner’s work, but rather the aspects of that work of which Vischer approves. Bodily form and soul on this account are translocated within the form of the object. The remainder of Vischer’s dissertation is an outworking the ways in which this projection is the model for empathic projection even in a waking state, often conducted in an ongoing locational discourse. As the action of empathy proceeds, for example, “empathy traces the object from the inside (the object’s center) to the outside (the object’s form)” (Vischer 1873/1993, 85).

Lipps, too, has a tendency to describe the action of empathy in locational terms. In describing the a focus upon the movement of his own arm, he declares:

In a word, I am now with my feeling of activity entirely and wholly in the moving figure [of my arm]. Even spatially, if we can speak of the spatial extent of the ego, I am in its place. I am transported into it. (Lipps 1903/1979, 375)

But whereas we might in recent literature expect the locational displacement of the ego in viewing one’s own arm to be contrasted in some way with the focus upon another’s arm, that is not in fact the contrast Lipps draws. While he acknowledges certain differences, he uses the locational emphasis as a model, and summarizes the experience of projected empathy in part in very locational terms. For Lipps, in aesthetic imitation (the core of empathy), “I am completely and wholly carried away from this sphere of my experience” (Lipps 1903/1979, 376). Carried away where? “Empathy means, not a sensation in one’s body, but feeling something, namely, oneself, into the aesthetic object” (Lipps 1903/1979, 377).

Self and soul, Vischer and Lipps assert, somehow come to at least temporarily inhabit the object of the subject’s aesthetic attention. This

That members of certain cults believe in the projection of souls into other humans does not nullify my belief that a majority of people in, say, Canada, including myself, don’t in fact view this as possible. It does suggest that merely disbelieving in this, without any other adequate defence, does not entirely justify dismissing Vischer’s and Lipps’ claims.

approach can be criticized from many angles, beginning with that of casual functional disbelief. Even most of those around me who believe in some sort of transcendence would find this sort of projection impossible. The attribution of naïveté to this view, then, partakes of a prevailing sense that the self or soul, however we understand them, cannot in fact be projected into an object or another person. By contrast

with the firm denial of this possibility, any assertion that we could in fact do so, let alone that this action is at the heart of a common experience such as empathy, appears naïve.

However, even choosing to treat the concept of empathic location metaphorically leaves a residue of problems. For example, whereas Vischer and Lipps often focus more on a desire for union, Worringer claims to find inherent in Lipps a contradictory drive:

The fact that the need for empathy as a point of departure for aesthetic experience also represents, fundamentally, an impulse of self-alienation is all the less likely to dawn upon us the more clearly the formula rings in our ears: 'Aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment.' For this implies that the process of empathy represents a self-affirmation and affirmation of the general will to activity that is in us [Instead] we are delivered from our individual being as long as we are absorbed into an external object In this self-objectivation lies a self-alienation Popular usage speaks with striking accuracy of "losing oneself" in the contemplation of a work of art.

In this sense, therefore, it cannot appear over-bold to attribute all aesthetic enjoyment—and perhaps even every aspect of the human sensation of happiness—to the impulse of self-alienation as the most profound and ultimate essence. (Worringer 1906/1997, 24)

Here the generally positive aspects normally suggested as causes for empathy by Vischer and Lipps are quite logically opposed by self-alienation. I don't experience empathy as alienation, nor as driven by alienation, and under our current constructions of the term, I imagine most of those around me wouldn't either. Nonetheless, Worringer's observations point to the inadequacy of the locational focus of Vischer and Lipps, even were we to take that approach as metaphorical, for Worringer's comments open the possibility that the loss of self as described by Lipps need not be driven by the migration of all of one's self into a desired union with another, but could instead be the direct result of the alienation of one's self, or the loss or desired loss of some aspect of one's self. This idea, then, is consistent with Lipps' and Vischer's descriptions of empathy but fails to connect with their own sense of its causes.

At the psychological level, perhaps an argument can be made that a desire to escape oneself might lead to the over-projected sort of experience which could be described as losing oneself. This need not be so, however. In my own experience of empathy, not just with my friend on her awful day but generally, I do not experience real confusion about just where I am, even when my "loss of self" approximates the descriptions given by all of the gentlemen in question. When I turn to the process of the poem in question, I discover a fundamental incoherence to the idea even when taken within the original context.

For surely if I am lost “in” something or someone else, my perspective ought to change. I ought specifically to see as they would see, or at least imagine that I do.

I remember being startled when my first child developed, at the age of four or five, the ability to project a point of view outside himself. He could assess the locations of people in a room, for example, as if from above. This was notably earlier than any evidence of the development of real emotional empathy of the perspective-changing type with others and well before any of the experts suggested using empathic analogy to help him understand the reactions of others. So from an early age we possess the capacity for an imagined change in cognitive visual perspective. Further, even serious comment might suggest that, “we can see the world through others’ eyes and feel their pain” (Kohn 1990, 181), thereby more or less equating empathic feelings with a shift of perspective, even if we don’t grant the possibility of truly visually seeing the world through their eyes.

Yet, even though under Lipps’ and Vischer’s terms a fusion of spatial disjunction to inner imitation is required to accomplish empathy, the visual aspect of dislocation, the concept of literal point of view, is mentioned by neither of them. This absence marks a failure in the idea of locational shift in empathy at the metaphorical level. In another context, Lipps himself suggests a better alternative:

Contrariwise, in aesthetic imitation this [self-other] opposition is absolutely done away with. The two are simply one. The mere mental image no longer exists In this ‘aesthetic imitation’ the facts seem to be analogous to what occurs in an unimitative movement of my own. The only difference seems to be that I now am conscious of experiencing and performing a movement which in fact, and for subsequent reflection, is the movement of another. (Lipps 1903/1979, 375)

Even when described by Vischer and Lipps in locational terms, this projection seems instead to be rather a loss of our conscious attention upon a sense of place, and not substantially different from the lack of spatial awareness which can occur with any “unimitative movement” of my own, or indeed with any intense focussed attention on something other than that immediate sense of place.

Although, as a part of the general loss of consciousness of my situation in my focus upon my friend I may have for a time lost a conscious sense of my location, this is, thus, not that strange—I often lose sight of myself in this particular way in the pursuit of other focussed activities. Lipps points out where the oddness lies for him:

From my seat in the theatre I observe a dance which is performed upon the stage. In this case it is impossible for me to take part in the dance. Nor do I have the desire to dance; I am not in the mood for it. Both my situation and attitude prevent any bodily movements. But this does not eliminate my inner activity, the striving and satisfaction I feel as I contemplate the movements enacted before me. . . . I experience the actual movement. I see it before me; not as my own of course. But in this lies the peculiarity of aesthetic imitation, that the alien activity takes the place of one's own. (Lipps 1903/1979, 375-6)

While it may be possible to be simultaneously engaged and aware, the sense of alienness arises precisely when the fact that we seem to feel somehow that the other's actions "take the place of" our own. Lipps tells us neither what signals this sense of the alien to the beholder, nor what constitutes it, though his own discussion has suggested two possibilities. The ways in which we are more aware of their state, at the time and in memory, than of our own has already been shown not to be that odd, but that state combined with the ways in which we are and are not seeming to experience the model's state together draw attention to the alienness of this situation.

To elaborate, the failure of the Lipps' and Vischer's locational approach here helps provide a clarification. It may not be a loss of self so much as precisely the oddness of seeming to only *partially* experience someone else's reality which catches our attention. I would not necessarily be consciously focussed upon and aware of my own arm were I to wave it through the air. Indeed, I have often been surprised to have friends comment upon how I wave my hands around when I talk in an animated fashion. Katherine was not necessarily conscious of her own arm moving through the air, and might well not remember it. But I noticed at the time and remember even now her arm moving through the air, while at the same time I have no idea what the actual physical disposition was of my own arm in that moment.

So it is perhaps precisely this disjunction which calls attention to itself as empathy—that without feeling the breeze moving through the tiny hairs on her arm, any more than I visually make any replica of what she is seeing, I nonetheless in some way feel her arm move in my mind. We are, once we become conscious of the situation, *more* aware of the model's movements and of their apparent emotions, than of our own at that moment. Indeed, empathy makes us more aware of their movements and emotions than our own in that moment, but also perhaps more conscious of what we perceive as their state than we usually are conscious of our own. This then has a reflexive effect, already alluded to by Stewart above, of

making us more conscious of our own movements and emotions than we might otherwise have been.

And the contrast between that absorption and our unconscious but retained sense of location makes clear that this is indeed an experience in which we can be profoundly absorbed, unaware of our own current state, but not in fact lost in the other. Under this account, Wyschogrod's use of touch, with its limitations seems a better metaphoric description of the action of empathy.

The locational metaphor, however, can do service as a description of naive or unrestrained empathy. Wyschogrod suggests that the locational limitations implied by touch are accurate descriptors of limitations inherent in empathy. Rogers' *as if* condition is not for him an absolute. Indeed the very suggestion (see "Carl Rogers" above) that we need to remember this condition implies that we can forget it, which forgetting then imperils the mature therapeutic practice of empathy. Hence, even if we grant these locational descriptions as metaphorically possible, they are not ones we would want to espouse as ideal or mature empathy.



As I sat in the car scribbling the first notes for the poem, "After He has Gone," I began with the word "gestation" and then immediately

crossed it out in favour of "habitation." This latter word encodes a clarifying distinction regarding the accuracy of even temporary habitation: her child was in her body, just as my child was within mine.

Vischer describes the end result of the process of empathic projection as a translocation so thorough that, "I wrap myself within its contours as in a garment" (Vischer 1873/1993, 101). Infants make shocking houseguests. They wear our bodies like Vischer's garments and make use of them for their own good. By contrast, I have not put on Katherine's body like any garment, even a temporary travelling cloak. And while "losing oneself in the other" is a common enough description of romantic or sexual love, in a non-sexual relationship the idea of doing so partakes of a creepy body snatching which is in fact metaphorically apt for what can go wrong with empathy when the beholder forgets the limits of touch, forgets the *as if*, and mistakes their emotional location. We not only *do not*, we *can not*, entirely adopt the point of view of another, so in this sort of intimate situation, with a therapist or anyone else, mistaken location results

not in better empathy, but quite possibly in the imposition of an alien point of view upon the supposedly inhabited person as if it were their own.

In the end then, the naiveté in my reactions and those of my friends did not consist in mistaking our location during the act of empathy—I did not in fact lose myself in the particular way which they are describing. But if I can plausibly claim not to have literally or metaphorically mislaid a part of myself in some foreign location, I can nonetheless be quite confused about accuracy of my inner imitation.

Accuracy in Aesthetic Imitation

Accurate imitation is what the reading group members imputed to me. They believed that I had somehow, through close attention and by a combination of something like intuition and analogy, experienced emotions and perhaps other more-cognitive sensations, which were if not identical at least very similar to what Katherine was feeling at the time, and all this without “objectively explicit” communication.

I’ve heard the “That’s exactly how it is!” sort of reaction derided as “naïve.” But empathy is such a compelling illusion it is easy to see how this confusion arises. Further, it’s no wonder that my friends would believe I had gained some privileged empathic access to Katherine’s state. After all, with a part of my life, I am an academic, years into reading sophisticated materials, asking all the relevant questions about the subject-object dichotomy, about the personal construction of reality, all with respect to empathy. Yet in my other incarnations as a friend and writer, I was shocked at Katherine’s first response to my poem, at what, despite my supposed critical sophistication, I experienced as a failure of imitation. Upon reflection, I realised that I was conceiving not just of my experience but of my own poem as somehow more a replication than a resonance.

This misapprehension of “vicariously experiencing” or “fully comprehending” the experience of another is by no means limited to me and my non-academic friends. Writers in considerably more technical contexts can also exhibit this belief. Raymond Mar, for example, in an otherwise insightful and careful article from within the realm of cognitive psychology, reminds us, “We are not privy to the thoughts and beliefs of others,” but then suggests rather confusingly that we can exercise the “ability to infer and

monitor the mental-states of numerous autonomous agents” (Mar 2004, 4). This sort of phrasing is general enough to make me wonder whether some fundamental aspect of our interpretation of this phenomenon as a genuine imitation may in fact be integral to the experience.

Both in practice and in analysis it is very difficult to separate intuitive inner imitation as described by Hoffman (above) from the unconscious and involuntary aspects of empathy. Nevertheless, the idea of inner imitation, an inner mimicry, is perhaps the single thought from Vischer and Lipps which has most persisted across time. However contested, it is also the single concept which appears in virtually every modern discipline discussing empathy. Hoffman, for example, citing research into infant mimicry, states that, “... one observes another’s expression of feeling, automatically imitates his expression, and then the brain takes over and makes one feel what the other feels” (Hoffman 2000, 37). Though mimicry begins with the external expression, here it ends with an absolute identity of feeling.

In a later chapter, I explore the physiological descriptions of empathy, but within this particular frame of discussion, a problem arises. Certainly, I believe physical mimicry likely occurred during the incident mentioned in the poem. Though I didn’t consciously imitate my friend’s physical state during our conversation, when I remembered the incident afterward, I remembered her, not myself. In precisely the fashion suggested in the section just prior to this one, I remembered her elbow on the small marble topped kitchen table; I have no idea whether mine was similarly placed. Precisely because I was unaware of my own physical behaviour, I have no way of knowing to what extent I physically responded to her physical being. If she was as absorbed as I, she can’t clarify the question for me, for she would remember me, rather than herself and be equally incapable of comparing our physical attitudes. We would need the sort of person who spies on patrons at art galleries, a Vischer or a Lipps, to spy out and inform us of the extent of our mimicry of each other. This aspect too is as Lipps’ has described it: unless for some reason I choose to focus on my own physical movements, I don’t in the ordinary run of things necessarily remember the sequence of actions I take in drinking a specific cup of tea.

I accompanied my friend Norah, who paints landscapes, to a frozen field near Vancouver. Wrapped in a down coat, I edited while she drew. After a few minutes I was distracted by a guttural grunt, and a few moments later by a groan. When asked, she said others had mentioned these verbalizations to her, but that she was completely unaware of making them as she worked. I remember her groans, though of course, as she was not aware of them at the time, she does not.

Yet, as I remember my overall sense, I know that in response to her grief my face wore a sadness which was not directly my own. And I remember the series of images which crossed my mind. The image of her arm, the image of a mirror, was not sense data from the immediate scene. These images, and others—the two of them in an earlier summer; her graceful arm moving through the air as she talks, so animated; her relative stillness at the table now—were fleeting. These images mixed at the time with what was before me.

The sharp contrast between her animation in memory and her flatness as she spoke that day appears to contradict Lipps' and Vischer's theories, since certain of these images seem to arise not in agreement, but in counterpoint to her immediate state. Yet precisely that counterpoint sharpens the sense

I experience other kinds of visual thinking, in particular a kind of verbal pun-nage. Recently a friend described the way the universe seems to thwart her plans, and guessed at a "closet coordinator of events." Anticipating her phrase internally, I understood her intended metaphysical paranoia, but what I saw for a flash was a dark-haired, slender man, very stylish in his attire (closeted?), standing before an incredibly modern, perfectly organized closet, full of those white enamelled racks—a strange conversational rebus that had NOTHING to do with my friend's intent, nor even with my own closet, more's the pity. This category of experience suggests a visual criticism of the verbal, in contrast with the verbal criticism of the verbal which predominates even in this dissertation.

of her current state. There is a mentation here which is sensual rather than verbal in its content, a visual logic of emotional apposition, sharpening my sense of the immediate by contrast rather than by agreement, rather in the way, already mentioned, that academic discussions may

proceed by disagreement rather than agreement.

Soon I will discuss the question of whether my brain could be described as replicating these motions, both those of Katherine on that day and those of the remembered events, in the body map within my cortex. For now I will only say that I not only saw the physical images of her body, but felt them in a near-physical way—shadowy, a spectral body moving within my mind.

Certainly, the sensual garment of which I was consciously aware, in which I wrapped my apprehension of and apprehension about Katherine's state, was only tenuously and infrequently made of my own cloak of flesh, at the conscious level. I was far more aware of the scene in which I was immersed and of the woman I was beholding. I was "no longer able to separate the perceiver from the perception" (Schopenhauer in Morgan 1996, 319). Again, this felt state is very like our own state when we are absorbed in something, and not conscious of our muscular activity. In other words I felt her movements in a

way not dissimilar from how I would remember moving my own arm, were I to focus upon it as an object of attention and then recall it later, or the way I would experience my own dream body, “objectified” in a “spatial form.”

As per Vischer, my imitative empathy seemed to imagine itself somehow from the inside, out—building for itself the body which fit my inner sense of Katherine’s experience which had accumulated through the encounter. That body had stretch marks: an emblem of her state. This, of course, was not true mimicry, any more than the rest of my experience was true inner imitation. What I had done was wrap my apprehension of Katherine’s emotional state in a patchwork garment involving my own current state—my stretch marks, which unlike many of my friends, I cherish, and in a state which I imaged as if I were in her position—the purse of skin empty now not just of children, but even of the male sex.

Thus, even in the details which related not to my current life, but hers, this was not her spectral body, but mine. Though I am not likely to confuse my projection into a statue with the statue’s own “feeling,” I can and did do exactly this with my friend. It is interesting to note that the older conceptions of empathic interaction we are considering here, with their metaphors of aesthetic observance, can in one light actually help to foster a more constrained understanding of what occurs when I (speaking narrowly) *observe* my friend in pain. The ways in which Lipps and Vischer address similarities in our empathic approaches to the human and non-human phenomena help to remind us that empathy is “objectified self-enjoyment” in either realm. This point of view, however, is after the fact, and very hard won compared to the immediate experience. Whilst in the midst of intimate conversation, and even afterward, I attributed an inner accuracy not only to my perceptions, but to the eventual poem.

Here, then, in the realm of empathic accuracy, my friends and I are guilty of a naïveté. My shock, my friends’ comments, both indicate an investment in the concept of accuracy of internal empathy, which constitutes a failure to focus upon, let alone understand the impulse and consequence of poetic action. What is at stake is not just confusion at the level of theory, but the potential for a confusion of the beholder’s feelings with those of the model, and any actions which might flow from this confusion.

The issues of locational ambiguity and accuracy of imitation each have as their focus the self-other nexus, and while I did not misplace myself locationally, I certainly did become confused about the relative accuracy arising from my seeming immersion in Katherine's state. Writers sometimes suggest that a work may be wiser than they are themselves, and in this case, the poem retains at least three markers, which, despite the deep empathic context of the original experience, retain a perspective from outside the model described.

The narrative is in first person—there is an “I” telling the story, and the repeated *as if* emphasizes each time the interpretive nature of the text. But the mirror in this poem especially embodies the ways in which I wasn't truly projected into Katherine's state and place. In the initial image, which was fleeting but very concrete, the view of the mirror was oblique, as if I were seeing the glass from one side. As if in a dream, someone is in front of the mirror, but from my angle, I cannot see them, nor their reflection. This image retains in its ambiguity a clarity which I myself at certain points lost. “I” am seeing, as if in “her” mirror, but there is no “who” in the glass.

Involuntary and Unconscious Aspects

Lipps and Vischer's focus upon involuntary and unconscious aspects of empathy can be seen in the discussions above: the body projects itself “unconsciously” (Vischer 1873/1993, 92), and we are, in empathy, “carried away from this sphere” (Lipps 1903/1979, 376). For Vischer, the fact, already mentioned, that the most crucial immediate influence upon his theory of empathy is provided by a book on dreams, argues for a focus upon the unconscious. This thoroughly unconscious projection of dreams, for him, is indeed the model for empathic projection even in a waking state. Not just the process, but the motivation for empathy are unconscious; the state of “pure absorption” which is the end-point of aesthetic empathy at which we arrive arises from “the unconscious need for a surrogate for our body-ego” (Vischer 1873/1993, 101).

Certainly a degree of unconsciousness marked my experiences with Katherine. As I sat with my friend that day I was frequently in Vischer's state of “pure absorption,” lost in her words and her state, in the sense that I was little conscious of my own physical body or my place in space. Nor did I in any con-

scious sense specifically choose to enter that empathic state, which the poem then recollects. I certainly didn't consciously mimic her physical behaviour.

All of these statements, but particularly this last, would help satisfy Lipps in my claim that my state was one of empathy, since he specifically theorizes the relationship of empathy to unconscious behaviour. For Lipps, inner imitation, the core of empathy, may best be seen in *contrast* to deliberate imitation. In deliberate imitation, I see the movement or posture of the other and am conscious of his inner activity of will or pride, while at the same time I experience both my own posture and inner qualities in my self. Aesthetic imitation is quite different.

Contrariwise, in aesthetic imitation this opposition is absolutely done away with. The two are simply one. The mere mental image no longer exists In this 'aesthetic imitation' the facts seem to be analogous to what occurs in an unimitative movement of my own. The only difference seems to be that I now am conscious of experiencing and performing a movement which in fact, and for subsequent reflection, is the movement of another. (Lipps 1903/1979, 375)

The critical nuance here, already noted in a section above, is that in my own willed action, say a choice to rise from a chair, I will usually decide and simply move. I will not normally be conscious of the immediacies of muscle tension, for example, in this act. I am instead conscious of the subjective qualities of willing or power (Lipps 1903/1979, 377). Even if I am physically imitating a person or sculpture, perhaps even going so far as to adopt their posture, this imitation is "far away from aesthetic empathy" (Lipps 1903/1979, 374) if I am at the same time conscious of my physical movements. Instead, in real empathy, I become "progressively less aware of muscular tensions or sense feelings" (Lipps 1903/1979, 376). Once again, the focus is upon the unconscious, in this case to the specific exclusion of the conscious.

These subjective states or qualities such as willing or power are the entire point. As summarized by Rader, Lipps' empathy is a result of the fusion of these inner activities, what we might call an emotion, such as pride or vigour, and pure physical stimulus (1979, 334). While viewing the beautiful object, I may experience the activity, such as "striving or willing, exerting or bestirring myself." While this sense of activity may become objective when contemplated later, it is not in any sense objective during the "immediately experienced activity" of contemplating the beautiful object of my friend's grief (Lipps

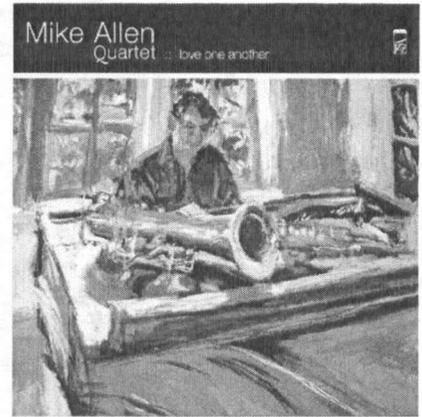
1903/1979, 371). Even immediately after I left Katherine's home, I was still gripped by the feelings I had experienced within, and I was replaying what I saw (the visual image of her face) and what I heard (the sound of her voice): in other words, the physical stimuli attached to an inner activity (the feelings). I also remembered the interplay between these immediate stimuli and the other images my mind imposed upon her words and in response to the experience as it played out. These I worked with to produce the poem. But just as Lipps suggests, these awarenesses were grasped as conscious objects for thought only after the fact. At the time, they were experiences which were registered, and therefore accessible to later memory, but unanalyzed.

As already mentioned, there exists even as early as Smith and Hume a conceptual divide between the volitional analogizing of putting oneself in another's shoes (Smith) and the unconscious and involuntary reactions of empathy (Hume). The rooting of Vischer's concepts in dreams, and Lipps' insistence on the opposition of consciousness to empathy, all indicate that the focus for Lipps and Vischer is clearly on the unconscious and non-volitional.

Choice

Nonetheless there are a number of aspects of this poem which deserve discussion under the rubric of choice. When I registered shock at my friend's reaction to my poem, I was betraying a failure to remember another crucial aspect of this poem, namely its constructed nature, and the choices which go into this process. The attempt to produce a non-falsifiable text (as per *Issues and Presuppositions*, above) does not imply that any direct replication can occur from experience. Rather, an entire series of choices occurs, many of them, such as retaining the "I," with ethical overtones. The photograph of the lute (in *Definitions*, above) carries with it a set of naïve assumptions about the idea of direct representation—that somehow the lute and piano simply and directly are what they are, ignoring the details of lighting and technology and framing. These details make an apt metaphor for the space in which I could respond to my friend, believing, if unconsciously, that my poem was in some sense a direct representation of her own state. These assumptions are discussed directly in Case Study II below.

For now, a better visual metaphor by far, one which incorporates the complex constructedness of the poem, has to do with Norah's drawing for the cover of Mike Allen's latest compact disk, *Love One Another* (2004). On the compact disk, Mike actually plays the saxophone, but in the drawing, the saxophone lies on the piano, as he plays his compositions from the compact disk on that piano while Norah draws him. The drawing tells, in the sense discussed above, a true story—Mike did play the piano as Norah drew—but she composed the drawing very deliberately. I did not structure the events at Katherine's house in the same way, but the poem itself was composed, and I worked on it very hard. Like Norah, I was indeed trying to create a communication or performance, and I certainly hope that in some way my experience of Katherine in that day travels to my readers or hearers.



Even if desired, perfect replication is never possible, but were I asked about the poem, “Did it really happen this way?” I could answer “Yes, it did.” I would mean by this, as per my comments in the Introduction, not that there was no design in the poem, but that I sought in this series of poems to write a poem which would at least not be falsified by the events, or at least not by my necessarily limited and faulty memory of them. By replicating this particular aspect of this particular experience, as truthfully as I could within the craft of poetry, I made more explicit *my own* empathic reaction, and thereby communicated something which Holly and the Bitter Ladies, though none divorced and all in long marriages, could then empathize with in turn.

However, this description oversimplifies by suggesting that an experience (my conversation with Katherine) occurred, and then that experience directly shaped the poem. This is temporally correct, but misses the ways in which my work of writing, or state of being a writer, ongoingly shapes my experience of such incidents as my conversation with Katherine. Another incident from the day I took the photo-

graphs helps to clarify this concept. That day, I walked out of Norah's house with my camera over my shoulder and was struck by a series of images, paving stones, a birdbath, which that day seemed to reflect a somewhat off-kilter but intense light, and which seemed almost to beg to be photographed. I indulged them by taking a series of pictures on my way home, most of which are in themselves off-kilter in some way. This is not my normal way of being as I walk home from Norah's house—I can say with reasonable certainty that I saw *what* I saw the *way* I saw it *because* I had my camera over my shoulder—I experienced the world as if it were already framed as a series of photographs waiting to happen.



I am only an occasional photographer, but I am a nearly continuous user of words, internally or externally, and have executed this sort of performative writing often enough over many years that my verbal camera is always over my arm, on the alert for the worded snapshot. This state of alertness certainly impacts even my immediate experience, such that with this poem and the others, phrases uttered by those upon whom I was focussed became almost a distraction from that focus. This superior alertness to certain turns of phrase, and to the ongoing word- and phrase-making which attend any experience, certainly affects the details of that experience. Further, if we are right about assuming the formative nature of language upon cognition, then my experience in this situation will have been shaped by my prior exposure to, or more accurately immersion in, the concept of empathy, even though I was not consciously thinking of that body of work at the time of the conversation. This complex process is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but the intricate mutually constitutive interaction between poem and experience is beyond doubt: I often or usually experience my auditory world as a series of word-events, waiting to be written.

I explore the remaining poems in this cycle in conjunction with scientific texts whose modes of discourse are necessarily oriented toward the deterministic and therefore non-volitional. They also primarily seek to explore unconscious phenomena. While we will never in our explorations recuperate the

visions of Lipps and Vischer with respect to the loss of self, or the locational shifts, we will recuperate in the scientific material a form of relative accuracy. With respect to this poem, this is good news. For one thing, my friend was able to tune my empathy—to correct the apprehensions I presented to her and in my poem—so if we accept the possibility of relative accuracy, and that words can play a rôle in that tuning, then we have the potential for growth and adaptation into higher degree of accuracy in at least an ongoing relationship. And we can hope for a generalization of that accuracy, a growing ability to tune our empathy even to those we don't yet know.

Duane and Anne

On a weekend in September, my husband Tom and I travelled on a cruise ship to the Princess Louisa Inlet to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of a camp there. This camp played a crucial role for my husband during his teens and in his eventual choice to become a church pastor. Tom, the most extroverted otherwise-normal person I know, was looking forward very much to the time, but I wandered around the week before reminding my friends that despite my obvious charm, the thought of being locked up on a boat with any 600 people with whom I had to pretend to be friendly, let alone a group of potentially very conservative Evangelical Americans, was giving me hives. I said that the women would all be blond (one way or another), and the men would all be self-made business men who wore jeans and cowboy boots and had short hair, and that they would all, male and female, be very, *very* nice. As it turned out, I was predominantly right on all counts, except that I failed to guess that I would be one of only a handful of *women* with short hair.

In any case, by the end of the first dinner, even Tom's patience with small talk was wearing thin, and we excused ourselves to go find the only close friends we had on the boat. They were nestled in a corner at a table for six with Duane and Anne who turned out to be a fascinating couple, somewhat older than the rest of us. We took over the two empty chairs, and during the next two hours we experienced one of those sudden drops into revelation and intimacy which can only occur in times and places sealed away from our ongoing lives.

Only when Duane stood up from the table did I realize he had a white cane. His gaze had been to all appearances perfectly normal as we all spoke, tracking with the conversation and seeming to focus. The next evening, we joined their table again. As we were all sitting down, I asked about it. "Oh yes, Duane's blind," said Anne. Later in the evening, Tom asked what had happened—a sudden failure of one and then the other optic nerve over only a few weeks—and then, "What has that been like for you?"

"I cannot look into her eyes and this is hard," Duane said, though he had given every appearance of doing so, "but harder for her than for me."

Anne looked at him as he said this, and then said, with great intensity, "I think what's hardest for me is, we will not see each other again." The phrase startled me with its first person plural. At the end of dinner we excused ourselves and I rushed back to our room, slightly drunk on the wine and company, and desperate to write this interchange into my journal. I was busy with my academic work, but within a few days, I typed a first version onto my computer, and began to turn it into a poem.

Duane and Anne

He says, "I cannot look
 into her eyes and this is hard,
 but harder for her than for me."
 Though his sight has gone,
 not hers, though she looks at him
 as she speaks, she says,
 "We will not see each other again."
 And I can hear her not seeing him.
 She is blind with his not seeing.
 She would be deaf with his not hearing.
 She can see him not seeing her
 as she speaks.

Eventually I thought "I should show Duane and Anne this poem." I believed, on balance, they would like it, but I was worried. What if they identified themselves with the poem, yet felt that I had completely misunderstood or even misrepresented them? Conversely, what if the poem caused them pain? Either way, I worried that they might resent the fact that I had mined our time together for a poem.

In the end I emailed:

Hi Duane and Anne,
 I am still thinking with real fondness of our time on the Malibu boat.
 You all were such a delightful part of those few days.
 I wound up writing a cycle of poems about middle-aged and older couples
 just after that time, and I wanted to let you see them. One of them
 arose out of my time with you two. I hope it isn't distressing for
 you. I don't know how much poetry you read, but I am constantly aware
 that my observations are just that—observations from a specific view-
 point. Indeed they can be nothing else—even empathy, as a poet friend
 of mine says, has more to do with *resonance* than *replication*.

... ..

Hope you are both well.

Duane responded:

It was so good of you to send us your poems. they are great! Anne and I enjoyed them very much.

Anne's response to my email was:

Dear Karen,
 Well, somehow this got to the bottom of the stack.....so sorry to be this long in responding to you. First of all, we too remember our time on the ship. Actually, it was probably a highlight for us.

 Karen, thank you for the lovely poetry. Actually, we are having a poetry read here....our second....on the 20th of March and I am reading a couple of yours. We have about ten folks....mostly faculty...for dinner and everyone reads something. Duane plays his trumpet as his gift to us.
 So, I will be so honoured to read a couple of yours. Thank you, thank you!

While I wasn't seeking permission—I had already written the poem, and planned to read it—I would have liked a more direct response to this specific poem about the two of them. It crossed my mind, out of interest, to ask, as I did with Katherine, whether they did in fact identify with the poem, and what their emotional responses were to it. However, I am not in the same sort of close relationship with them, and have not pursued it. Nevertheless, my response to their emails was to feel reassured, not least because they responded to the set as a whole, and intended to read not one, but several. The very indirection relative to the specific poem suggested that it was being treated as a poetic artefact, rather than a direct personal commentary.

In this process, empathy was at play in a number of ways: in my original experience, in Duane's expression of empathy with his wife's emotions, in the eventual communication with them about the poem, and in the writing of the poem itself, which reflected my attempt to describe the process which had occurred before me—a failure of sight which had led to a complex, multi-layered, and highly refracted mirroring of emotions. The attempt to frame the limits of my expertise about their experience directly reflected on the one hand, my recent experiences with Katherine, and, on the other, the reading and thinking I was doing about the question of empathy from a more academic standpoint.

MIRROR NEURONS

When Anne sees Duane not seeing her, she experiences visually a failure of visual mirroring. The nature of the early theories of empathy, with their focus on art (especially the “higher“ arts) and on the complexities of human interaction, suggest that this mirroring is a highly sophisticated activity. And indeed it is; yet this activity has a corollary in the brain reactions of macaques—short-tailed Old World monkeys often used in research. Gallese *et al* looked at a set of 532 neurons in a particular area of the macaque brain which had previously been identified in “goal-directed hand and mouth movements” such as reaching for, grasping and eating a raisin (1996, 594). The researchers discovered that a specific set of these neurons, now named “mirror-neurons,” fired when one macaque *observed* another in this same action. The mere sight of the other macaque, or of the raisin, did not stimulate this response.

Research like this has been picked up by those who examine how humans understand other humans’ minds, a field called “Theory of Mind,” which draws in a highly interdisciplinary way from philosophy, cognitive and neuro-psychology, and neuropsychiatry. For these researchers, the idea that macaques simulate each others’ behaviour within their “mental muscles” was startling. Rizzolatti *et al* (1996) decided to look for a similar reaction in humans. While researchers are not allowed to connect probes directly to human neurons, the pattern of brain activation as measured on scans by increased blood flow strongly suggested that human brains, too, reflect the actions of others in ways similar to the representation of actions by themselves.

The directly visual aspect of this is represented in “Duane and Anne,” in which Duane’s failure of sight means that he cannot see Anne’s reactions to his own failure to see, though he can discern aspects of her reactions through his other senses, and, since he is recently blind, I can’t help but wonder if he “sees” her facial reactions with his inner eye. Anne, in her long intimacy with him, is not fooled by the superficial tracking of his eyes from person to person as they speak. She knows that, whatever his remembered vision of her is, the immediacy of gesture, the moment-to-moment changes of her expression, are not mirrored within him any more, and she experiences this in such a way that she reflexively labels not just him, but the two of them together, with his blindness.

But why should we need to reflect another's activities in this way? The location of the mirror neurons in a goal-directed area of the brain suggests that planning or at least anticipation may be involved. Most theorists link this skill to our need to anticipate others' behaviour, and indeed we seem to be rather good at that anticipation. After all, when we are surprised by another's behaviour, we are only testifying to the ongoing fact that we usually are *not* surprised.

Ramnani and Miall used cued finger movements of the right hand to examine this question within the context of the advanced human capacity to "understand others' intentions" (2004, 85). What they found reads rather like a neuroscientist's rewrite of Lipps and Titchener:

In summary, we have shown that the human motor system is engaged when subjects use arbitrary visual instruction cues to prepare their own actions, and also when they use the same cues to predict the actions of other people. However, these two tasks engage separate sub-circuits within the premotor system These results suggest that understanding the action-related mental states of others may not be explained by simulation theory alone. Although predicting the actions of others does involve the motor system (PMv), thus supporting simulation theory, activation of PMv instead of PHd suggests that *pure simulation of the other person's mental state cannot be the mechanism used. Rather it is likely that we understand the actions of others either by mental imagery of their actions or by the simulation of our own action.* (Ramnani and Miall 2004, emphasis mine)

Perhaps surprisingly, the applications of these various findings to the concept of empathy include a partial reclamation of the idea of empathic accuracy, at least with respect to simple volitional movements. These findings suggest that we can and do mirror the behaviour of others. To the extent that my brain is similar to another's, the relevant parts of my brain can mirror that other's behaviour in ways which are more or less similar to the firing which would occur if I were performing that same action. But the existence of a separate system for anticipating the behaviour of others, for assessing their intentions, places limits upon our empathy, even at this quite simple level. It looks indeed as if, at least within this activity, we *don't* directly simulate the other's mental state, but rather engage in some combination of analogical mental imagining and a simulation of *our own* similar actions (with this mirroring enabled by the mirror neurons).

There seems no particular reason to assume that this mirroring skill is highly limited. Indeed, Duane's emotional mirroring of his wife's greater distress was certainly borne out by our subsequent conversations with them. It seems reasonable to presume similar systems for at least the other senses, espe-

cially those important to communication. I assume for example that Anne's particular tones of voice invoke in Duane a mirroring as well, such that his brain's complex pattern of activation includes neurons firing in a way similar to how they would fire were *he* using that tone of voice. From the speaker's and hearer's perspective, this phenomenon might better be called an echo, or even a sub-sonic resonance, since the beholder is not necessarily conscious of the replication within the system. It is the neuroscientist who will *see* the neurons matching up and therefore, even in an auditory or tactile situation, experience the relationship via the visual metaphor of mirroring.

And I too see and hear, picking up and mirroring in Anne's way of looking at Duane, in their way of speaking to and about one another, the failure of mirroring I cannot see with Duane myself, because his eyes seem normal, because his gaze tracks, and because I do not know him well enough. And in doing so, I anticipate another possible reality, another possible set of reactions; I mirror in my own reactions to them the possibility that a loss of hearing would have a very similar impact, be a similar mirrored failure, but auditory this time.

Bob's Janey

My mother-in-law, eighty at the time I wrote this poem, has had noticeable Alzheimer's disease for several years now. She and her husband Bob were married two years after Tom and I were. Both came from difficult first marriages which were, nonetheless, dissolved against their desires. They have lived their twenty-five years together with enormous affection and gratitude for one another. In September, 2003, we visited them in their home, about five hours drive away from ours. On the first evening, Tom and I listened from the living room as Bob, also eighty, struggled to get Jane ready to attend a cocktail party down the street. Jane had not opened her purse in years and had lost it several times recently, but he could not convince her to leave it behind. What Bob was experiencing as balkiness, Tom and I experienced as Jane's lack of the tools to process the situation. She simply did not believe Bob when he said, "You don't need it." Reminding her that she had recently lost it several times didn't work either—she didn't remember *ever* losing it. In the end, Bob got her out the door without her purse.

Periodically throughout the evening she wanted her bag, and I found her at one point searching for it in our hosts' empty living room, picking up and looking under the throw cushions on the sofa. It was easy to assure her, though, and then distract her. I was distressed, not for the first time, that what seemed to work best was treating her like a small child. The next day Bob said to me, "I get so angry with myself for being irritated with her." I told him that we could see his love for her, and that anyone would be irritated from time to time. Yet when I tried to suggest by way of comfort that Jane probably didn't remember his irritation, he rejected the idea categorically.

On the way home, Tom and I discussed whether to talk to Bob about the incident. Almost all of Bob's interactions with Jane were still full of care and warmth; we didn't worry for her at all. But we were worried for *him*. Bob had adopted over the last few years the full burden of their household life, chores like shopping, cooking and laundry he had never done in all his years as a cardiologist, and he seemed very tired and even depressed to us. If he was beating himself up over lapses in patience, at least in part through a failure to recognize how severe Jane's losses had become, it seemed simply more than

he should bear. If we were right about her memory, then recognizing this might help relieve the tension for him. Yet, in watching their conversations, it was clear Bob still believed Jane to be engaged in some meaningful way.

I found myself saying to Tom, “Only his love keeps her here.” A strange pun-like sense of *kept* struck me as I spoke the words. Certainly without his continuing affection and love, she would not be the happy and peaceful woman she manifestly still was—Bob’s love *kept* her in this state. His assumption of her physical care *kept* her physically in her own home, where she was still comfortable, and could navigate, and where we could still experience her in many familiar ways. His love also *kept* her present to him in ways which seemed un-tethered to the experience anyone else was having with her, and in doing so, increased his frustrations with her and thus his own pain. In the end, it seemed to us that he would be even more profoundly lonely than he already was if he saw Jane as further gone.

What is it about hearing another’s pain? Jane began failing rapidly and we were often on the phone with Bob once we returned home. At one point, something in the tone of his first few words caused me to think, almost audibly, “I don’t want to hear this.” And indeed what he told us was very difficult: her balkiness and paranoia were increasing, and she had moved from “incontinence of urine” to “incontinence of stool,” as he put it with his old-school physician’s technical delicacy.

Something else happened once we returned. I was startled to realize how often I, too, reached for my purse. I, too, would go through a slight panic when I couldn’t lay my hands on it, usually then remembering that I had brought only my wallet along for some particular errand. I noticed my friends, too, habitually reaching for their bags. Missing purses were like amputated limbs; they itched even when they weren’t there. Yet I had not noticed this behaviour before. The entire package of experiences, including the various words and the ways they played in my mind, would normally have motivated me to write either a poem or a short reflection. But I was resistant; I didn’t want to go through the articulation of the emotional pain attached to the situation. However, the day I grouped the first three poems together under the title “Old Love,” I knew that I also wanted to include this fourth one as well, and I began to write it, using at first the title, “Only His Love Keeps her Here.”

Bob's Janey

I

It's been years since she opened it
but like any woman she's always
reaching reaching for her purse.

She can't remember stalking the house
for hours after leaving it behind at a party
or in the lady's room at church.

But she does know she's a lady, and though
it's long since she ceased even to say
her children's names, a lady carries a purse.

II

He just can't believe she can't remember,
so he tells her for at least the fifth time,
"You don't need that bag at the party tonight."

As long as she wants her purse, she might
still be his Janey; if only she might
remember, she is, for him, still here.

The writing was emotionally hard, the editing has been harder. In keeping with our original decision not to press our understanding upon Bob, I chose not to share this poem with him.

Co-incidences which, were they to happen in fiction, would seem terribly contrived sometimes insert themselves into daily life. On the day I gave myself to finally finish the first draft of this chapter—I told my husband in the morning I wouldn't go to bed until it was done. At dinner time, Bob called to tell us that he had put Jane that day into a home for Alzheimer's patients. Throughout the long conversation we had with him he was tender and grief-stricken, though fortunately not feeling guilty about the decision. He was even already a little relieved. But he kept saying, every few minutes, "I better get off the phone, now." And his reason each time was something like, "I don't want to dump all this (meaning his emotions) on you."

In turning from that phone call to this paper, it crossed my mind that some day, perhaps, I will be able to let Bob read "Janey's Purse." For now, though, it feels still too likely to invoke pain. There is in

all of these interactions evidence of aversion, on my part and Bob's, both to hearing and to expressing that pain. Having said this, there is nevertheless a potential loss for Bob, what the economists would call an opportunity cost. Certainly a great deal of therapy is predicated upon the idea that talking about past and current difficulties can have a beneficial impact on one's mental health. There is also a common ground-level assumption that overall physical health can improve in response.

NARRATIVE AND TRAUMA

Beginning with Pennebaker and Beall's landmark study (Pennebaker and Beall 1986), a significant number of studies have explored specifically this question: Does writing about trauma improve health across a broad range of areas? In that original study, writing about a specific trauma during four one-hour sessions led to statistically significant improvements in measures of physical health. Studies since that time have distinguished between those who have suffered severe trauma (such as sexual or physical abuse) and more usual trauma (the death of a grandparent), and have extended the health outcomes examined as well. A literature review (Smyth 1998) concluded that good evidence of statistically significant impact existed for this and similar tasks in the areas of reported health, psychological well-being, general functioning, and physiological functioning. No statistically significant improvement was found in health behaviours. Other more-specific findings of interest include greater health improvement amongst more-traumatized people (Greenberg and Stone 1992), and increased long-term positive health effect when depression was greater immediately post-task (Greenberg and Stone 1992; Pennebaker and Beall 1986; Murray, Lamnin, and Carver 1989). Finally, these results seem to replicate not just among college students (who share relevant characteristics such as youth, above-average health, and above-average competency at life-skills) but among mill-workers (Pennebaker 1993) and psychiatric prison inmates (Richards et al. 2000).

But what has any of this to do with empathy? A number of models have been proposed to account for the above results. One study (Greenberg, Wortman, and Stone 1996), while setting out to examine two of these competing models (inhibition and self-regulation), generated results that correlate very

well with the work mentioned about empathy above. In this study, female participants with “real-trauma presence” (self- and other-assessed) were divided into three groups. Control group participants visualized their campus in detail. The other two groups wrote about severe abuse (“physical abuse, sexual molestation, rape, death or life-threatening illness of a parent, family violence, a life-threatening injury or accident, violent assault, abandonment by a parent, parental divorce, and witnessing a gruesome event” (Greenberg, Wortman, and Stone 1996, 591)), and were paired by the severity of “event-topic” as judged by independent evaluators. In each pair one person wrote about their *real-trauma* event, the other wrote about a similarly severe *imaginary-trauma* event (drawn from personal descriptions and police files).

DIGRESSION: “IMAGINARY” TRAUMA

Here the words “imaginary” and “real” become particularly confusing. Even within the discourse of research psychology, it seems perverse to call the second group “imaginary.” The events were drawn from first-person descriptions of trauma and from police files. There seems no particular reason to describe the events themselves as more imaginary than the first person accounts written as a part of the study. Fortunately, in this context, the question of relative truth value is not the issue, nor the relationship of the texts to the initial events, but rather the different relationship of the writers to the material, and whether the outcomes of the study vary relative to that relationship.



The results of this study for the real-trauma group were essentially what would have been expected from the prior studies in this area. The results for the imaginary-trauma group, however, were startling, particularly in the area of health improvements at follow-up. In summary, while there were some specific differences between groups, the imaginary-trauma groups’ results were far more similar to the real-trauma group than to the control group. For example, both trauma groups experienced “significantly more intense, fearful, angry, and depressed moods and less intense happy mood” immediately post-task. This seems reasonable, but it is also true for the imaginary-trauma group that “better health at follow-up was associated with perceiving the imaginary event as more traumatic, reporting more negative

mood at immediate posttest, and reporting less negative mood at longer term follow-up” (Greenberg, Wortman, and Stone 1996, 598). The researchers summarize that “participants who benefited the most from the imaginary-trauma intervention were those who became affectively immersed in the imaginary-trauma scenario, yet were able to modulate and limit these reactions such that relief and diminished negative affective arousal were reported in subsequent weeks” (Greenberg, Wortman, and Stone 1996, 405). So not only did the participants resonate with someone else’s trauma in ways similar to those writing about their own trauma, the strength of this resonance affected the outcomes. The trauma therapists I know borrow a metaphor from chemistry when they seek to “titrate” the effects of severe traumatic event, and the results above appear to be just such a titration of impact. Indeed, the researchers go on to suggest possible applications of this effect in therapy with persons whose trauma is so severe that they might not be yet able to confront that real trauma directly.

These results are congruent with much of the research occurring about empathy in its various manifestations. If, as the study just above suggests, the task of writing about imaginary trauma has its greatest positive impact when it affects participants *as if* it were real trauma writing, then surely some form of simulation seems to be an appropriate model. It is a conceptual leap, but a compelling one, to guess that the more rudimentary forms of simulation we’ve discussed are a part of or basis for far more elaborate kinds of simulation. The results of this study strongly suggest that, for people who have already experienced a significant trauma, empathic participation in someone else’s trauma yields benefits remarkably similar to those gained by writing about one’s own trauma.

Within the arts, potential implications of this line of thinking the arts are myriad. To take one example, this sounds rather like the common view of catharsis, and indeed this idea has theoretical echoes across a wide variety fields, and specifically back into aesthetics, even ancient aesthetics. So, for example, Harold Skulsky might be right to state with respect to tragic catharsis in Aristotle that, “... the simple homeopathic theory of Weil and Bernays does not fit the facts” (Skulsky 1958, 157). However, from the perspective of neuroscience, he might be very precisely wrong about what actually happens in the experience of a tragic play, wherein, through participation in imaginary trauma, at least some of the audience

might indeed experience something very like emotional homeopathy indeed. Even more to point, Aristotle's instructions on this issue strongly align with that latter view:

At the time when he is constructing his Plots, and engaged on the Diction in which they are worked out, the poet should remember (1) to put the actual scenes as far as possible before his eyes (2) As far as may be, too, the poet should even act his story with the very gestures of his personages. Given the same natural qualifications, he who feels the emotions to be described will be the most convincing; distress and anger, for instance, are portrayed most truthfully by one who is feeling them at the moment. (Aristotle 1954, 245, ch. 17)

Based on the studies mentioned above, this poet should not only affect his audience more profoundly, but experience significantly improved health himself.

Certainly, by writing about my own reactions to Bob and Jane, by encoding my own trauma into a poem, I allow myself these various benefits. I express my own current pain, but also perhaps allow some future benefit as well, confronting a vision of myself as an eighty-year-old, clutching my purse. It seems likely too that those who hear or read these poems benefit as well: a divorced woman reading about Katherine, an elderly woman, with her dementia-addled husband sitting nearby, reading about Jane. Bob, for now, doesn't benefit, if he would, from writing his own poem, or from any direct identification he might have with mine. Instead, what Bob may need is a poem by someone who is not his daughter-in-law about someone who is not his wife. The studies just above suggest that the resonance desired is that of separate instruments, not identical ones: perhaps the subtler effect generated in my friend Norah's lute, hanging on the wall, when a jazz musician plays her piano while she is painting him. The musician is not trying to affect the lute, nor even necessarily aware of it, but the strings resonate softly nonetheless.

Biblical Translation

On a late Sunday afternoon in September, Tom and I were trapped at a conference in Whistler, B.C.; the bridge at one end of town and the road at the other had both washed out, and Squamish below was flooding. Both tired, we were making lazy love, really more an affectionate precursor to a nap than any act of passion. Our curtains were open; we were up quite high and only the tops of some tall trees opened to our windows. The light kept changing, at one point shifting suddenly from dark to quite light without ever losing its strange sulphury-grey timbre, an apparent effect of the storm. Tom's face was very still, and for just a moment took on the aspect of a pale and beautiful effigy. This was not altogether unpleasant, but still a little eerie with its intimations of cathedral saints and tombs. A fleet second later, I saw in my mind's eye biblical words crossing my mental field of view, as if they were on transparent banners crossing an inner sky, and they brought with them a shimmer of associated images. The words moved into and across this space oddly, in such a way that they revealed only the Hebrew word in proper order, since Hebrew reads from right to left. The entire episode lasted perhaps a second, and while richly experienced, was not charged with any particular strong emotion.

Though I knew I would write about this image, try to tease out its associations, there was no sense of worry that I might lose either the image itself or the affect accompanying it so, fortunately enough under the circumstances, I did not feel a need to immediately write anything down. Later in the evening I began to describe what had happened in my journal, and when I got home, I began to shape the words.

Biblical Translation

Suddenly, after 26 years, your rapt face,
 in pause a scant hands-breadth from my own
 is for the first time a saint
 a script carved in ivory
 its eyes closed and a slight hieratic smile
 the autumn afternoon light translucing
 the bridge of the nose, the tip of an ear.
 In this moment before you enter me
 first the English "hovering"
 then the Hebrew and the Greek

“merachéfet” “epephéreto”
 float like banners from left to right across
 the sky of my mind: hovering
 (in that alien continuous tense)
 of the *rúach elohím*
 first breath of God
 over the face of the deep—
 and in the scant moment
 before that spirit breathed
 into Mary’s womb the light
 that would remake the world.

I would in time have shown Tom this poem, though I usually wait until a poem is near completion to do so. In the end, he was coming with me to the Poetry Café, and I wanted him to know what I would be reading. It seemed to me that he might feel some embarrassment, despite my caveats about it being *my* experience, so I read the poem to him, though at the time the title was, “On the Strange Things Biblical Translation does to the Brain.”

While my need to tell Tom prior to the Café was motivated partially by an empathic worry regarding his response, the genesis of this poem is less obviously tied into empathy. The immediate resonances were with words and translation, both of which I love. There was no Alzheimer’s, no blindness or divorce on the horizon, either. Nonetheless, as will be seen, empathy was lurking, and not just in my academically over-heated brain.

A number of studies help us to focus on at least one specific link between poetic writing and empathy. Any basic psychology text will describe ways in which the human brain activates differentially during different language tasks. However, a new level of sophistication has arisen with newer scan techniques such as positron emission tomography. Nichelli *et al* (2000) distinguish clearly between the recall of word lists, and the recall of narrative information. Another study focuses upon narrative—the reading of one of Aesop’s fables—during which participants demonstrated clearly distinguishable patterns of brain activation for grammatical, semantic, and moral conditions (Nichelli *et al*. 1995).

The fact that the brain activates differently during a variety of reading related tasks would make it likely that the links between different sorts of literature and empathy would vary, and indeed, Raymond

Mar has constructed a study showing differences on a number of scales of empathy between those who prefer fiction and those who prefer non-fiction (Mar 2004). Mar reviews literature demonstrating that

Readers often comprehend a story by assuming the perspective of a character... and mentally represent his or her emotions Moreover, these emotional experiences are equivalent in type and magnitude to those evoked by everyday events Considering how closely related real-world and narrative-processing appear to be, it should not be surprising that engagement with fictional narratives can result in changes of belief and attitude, much like those produced in the real-world (5)

His study then goes on to develop a compelling link between the preference for fiction and a wide variety of scales for empathy which correlate well to both self- and other-assessment of empathy.

Mar's study is ambiguous in some important ways, most especially in teasing out which characteristics distinguish fictional text from non-fiction text. He suggests the absence of "characters" in non-fiction (8), whereas clearly at least some non-fiction invokes the "characters" of persons such as historical figures. He does not go into any detail about which kinds of non-fiction are involved. The inferred differences, however, suggest that the two types of literature he is distinguishing differ both in how narrative they are, and in the level of engagement with characters, with fiction scoring higher on both. In any case, his claim is plausible that "Narratives are fundamentally social in nature in that almost all stories concern relationships between people; the ability to understand people's beliefs and emotions is thus likely to be necessary for story comprehension" (4).

A further fascinating result was that deeper immersion in the fictions correlated with higher levels of personal empathy. Correlation is not causation; Mar suggests that only future research will establish whether, for example, urging children to experience narratives of certain kinds will affect their empathic skills. Yet there *is* a correlation between those who engage deeply in certain kinds of narrative and levels of empathy as measured broadly in a number of ways.

Taking all we've discussed about simulation, imaginary trauma, and now the various research mentioned above, we should be able to grant that the reading of narratives about others provokes empathic responses within our own systems. This insight in turn helps to explain my complex feelings in showing the poems to people who helped stimulate their creation. My own empathic understanding rec-

ognizes that—regardless of my intellectual clarity about the nature of poems as constructed artefacts—their impact upon the people who read them will depend upon their level of identity, conscious and sub-conscious, with what is described. An added intensity attaches to “Janey’s Purse” not only because the stakes seem high if Bob does identify with it, but also because the poem itself, during the editing process, lost the presence of the observer. Upon the advice of every writer who read it, “I” was taken out, leaving the poem without its own internal distancing mechanism.

For now, I want to focus on one aspect of the production of poetry, in asking a question: Granting the potential impact of narrative involving characters, why tell these four small narratives as poetry? A hint may exist in a body of literature from the field of linguistics. While there is a large overlap, on average the poet focuses far more upon the word-by-word process of writing and reading, as compared to the other levels of the text. Certainly, I do, when I am working on a poem as compared to a short story or essay. Every poet I know tests not just the overall flow of a piece, nor even the phrases, but each word for its aptness, working from phrase to word to phrase to poem to word to poem again.

If narrative is a particular distinguishable mental activity (Bruner 1986; Gerrig 1998, and Nichelli 2000 above), and fiction and non-fiction have distinguishable effects, then what is it about language and empathy that is being invoked in the poet’s acute attention to word and phrase? Zwaan asks us to consider a multiplicity of findings about language which will now sound somewhat familiar, including

1. Words activate brain regions that are close to or overlap with brain areas that are active during perception of or actions involving the words’ referent Brain lesions in patients with selective semantic impairments affect perceptual representations
2. Visual representations of object shape and orientation are routinely and immediately activated during word and sentence comprehension Visual-spatial information primes sentence processing and may interfere with comprehension
-
4. When comprehending language, people’s eye and hand movements are consistent with perceiving or acting in the described situation. (Zwaan 2004b, 35-6)

Zwaan proposes an overlapping three-part view of the processing of language consisting of activation, construal, and integration. *Activation* operates at the level of the word or morpheme, *construal* at the level of the clause, and *integration* proceeds toward connected discourse (Zwaan 2004b, 38). These proc-

esses are all occurring simultaneously, of course, during reading, but I would like to suggest that writers of longer prose narratives focus their efforts and attention on issues most closely bound up with the level of integration and discourse, plot and character for example. Poets on the whole, I think, tend to focus more upon the levels of activation and construal, hearing internally the individual words and their immediate connections with adjacent words more acutely than the writer of a novel, and usually working far harder during the editing process upon this level than the writer of a novel, or perhaps even a fable, could, given the differences in scale. Conversations with a number of published authors (including Nicola Aime and Luci Shaw) who write both prose and poetry so far confirm these generalizations.

In his discussion of activation Zwaan cites a body of research supporting the idea that as we process individual words, and then phrases, we are experiencing moment by moment simulations within our minds, representing the referents of those words and phrases to ourselves in distinct neurological forms. In research of his own, for example, he likes to use the example of two sentences: *The ranger saw the eagle in the nest*, and *The ranger saw the eagle in the sky*. Despite the fact that grammatically only one word distinguishes the two sentences, it is clear that most readers would visualize the first eagle not only as in the nest, but with its wings closed and the second with its wings spread. In a larger experiment, he indeed demonstrated conclusively that participants envisioned the shapes of named objects mentally, at great speed, and without necessarily being aware of this process (Zwaan, Stanfield, and Yaxley 2002).

In the case of these particular poems, and in this particular context, I experience being suspended between a desire to tell the story in as true a fashion as possible and a desire to engage those who would read or hear them. I certainly hope that the poems not only entertain and engage readers, but provide something of the larger impact suggested in the section about "Janey's Purse" above. However, in writing, and especially in editing, these small stories as poems, I was, as a poet, was attending very closely to the associative power of the words and phrases contained therein. In working so intimately with the words, I was not only listening for their resonances within me, but calling up some prospective sense, stored through a lifetime of developing a general theory of the human mind: a sense of how others might hear what I am writing.

In "Biblical Translation," however, an even more word-specific dynamic was at work. The words floating across my mind, and the visions they evoked, had as their referents material which tapped at least partially into work I had done at a theological graduate school, where I had loved Hebrew, but not especially liked Greek. Clearly some of the Greek had lodged in the crevices, however, and in order to work on the poem, I sought the help of Stefan Lukits, the young Swiss pastor of a German-speaking Lutheran congregation here in town. I knew that, unlike me, he was a real scholar of Hebrew, and that he also knew Greek. We exchanged emails for some days, examining tense and number, looking at shades of meaning. Finally, the day of the Café, I sent him the poem, and received this response:

From: Karen Cooper
 To: 'Stefan Lukits'
 Subject: RE: poem

Thank you, Karen, for letting me partake in your poem. It is quite wonderful. I like the way the reader slowly and gently finds out who the principal characters are. There is a lot about the process of reading in this, until at the end it moves abruptly to incarnation—a hint that reading ultimately always proceeds towards incarnation? That texts "enter" us sexually, i.e. in the flesh? Rabbinic thought, I think, has quite a bit to say about the connection between reading scripture and kissing a lover.

I take offence, of course, that you don't capitalize Spirit. So, your poem evokes what poetry is meant to evoke: wonderment, thinking, reconsidering, offence. . . .

Good luck at the poetry reading.

Stefan

From: Karen Cooper
 To: 'Stefan Lukits'
 Subject: RE: poem

Stefan,

Thanks for you comments. I very much appreciated them. And, like many poets, I think the answers to your questions are all both "Yes," and, "I am not totally sure." For me, the work and play of poetry proceed from such a different place than even the work and play of reading poetry. So I think I might well READ my poem as you do, yet I can say with absolute certainty that I didn't WRITE it with any of these things in my conscious mind. Rather, a specific real incident needed to be incorporated in words, and the play of word and image and immediate memory in my mind, the musicality of the text, and the sheer delight I always take in translation were intimately intertwined. Translation is for me such a DEEP pleasure—it has its roots very near those of all the other deeply pleasurable things, including of course loving sex. So I

think, yes, texts enter us and emerge from us, in en-fleshed form. They play within our bodies, within our brains. I think we are, if we allow ourselves, in a state of psychic and sensual response both when we read and when we write, though I don't really see the two—mind and body—as separate.

So, even though they were not in my conscious mind, all of the things you say are things I would hold as pre-conceptions, if I may pun here, so they would no doubt be active in some way as I wrote. Nonetheless, the sensation is one of discovering these things after they are written, rather than writing down something I already know, for which I merely need to find the words.

.....
By the way, I tried the poem with "Spirit" capitalized—I actually hadn't thought of it until you wrote. But for some reason, at the intuitive level, I like it better this way. It feels like it has something to do with the distance I impose early, when I use "its" instead of "your". Not sure yet why, but it will probably make itself clear to me.

.....
kc

Stefan's reaction, though brief, provoked a series of strong reactions in addition to those I included in my email to him. In particular, it felt like he had tuned into—had somehow intuited or empathically resonated with—a larger context for the poem. The links between incarnation and sex, though I had never discussed these things with him, nor thought consciously about them while writing and editing the poem, nonetheless betrayed a whole inner world. It is a world which I would quite likely have been embarrassed to articulate directly, especially in its seeming religiosity, yet there it was, revealing itself to me in an unguarded moment. Quite aside from any other response, it reminded me that the work I am here doing—exploring the deep importance of narratives—is confirmed in my own case, where the stories which surround my adult spiritual practice have invaded me and woven a web of associations which can emerge at the oddest times.

My other thoughts included the fact that I was raised in a Gnostic cult where we were enjoined to "Wear our bodies like clothes, which can be changed at any moment," and where much of the suffering inflicted upon me was intended for my good—in all seriousness to *help* me achieve that state of transcendent detachment. Yet adult sex undercut the success of those attempts at disembodiment. It was full of gifts—not just the joy of pleasing my husband and the empathic participation in his more-naturally em-

bodied delight, not just the shocking production of children who were somehow nourished into viable being by my body, but, as another friend of mine, also terribly traumatized in childhood, has put it for dissociated people, there is “the odd, odd grace of sex,” in which the disjointed parts of me seem to fuse.

Now, under a new understanding and speaking bodily, I would say that sex was just so damned much fun that my entire body, including my poor overworked dissociative brain, found a way to make it happen. Equally, I can say that in early adulthood loving adult sex was one of only two places where I was rejoined, or so it seemed at the time. The other was the liturgical worship in the Anglican Church, where I located my spiritual practice from the age of nineteen. Somehow, in each context, I was being re-incarnated, though not because I was not already carnal; one of the nice ironies of the shift in my point of view is that I now see that my prior Gnostic disembodiment was not a state of mind, but a state of body. So these two loci, sex and liturgy, were rather in the form of a flash, a brief vision well in advance of any articulated spiritual or intellectual understanding, of the fact that I was a single unified being.

The way Stefan sees the level of “reading” in the poem also ties into my failure to fall in with an entirely despairing view of the nature of language. I would indeed say that “texts ‘enter’ us sexually, i.e. in the flesh,” that somehow in writing a poem I am making it possible for the reader to resonate physically to the music of my experience, and in the case of deeply empathetic poems about others, to resonate in response to their experience, to have their own experience refracted through my mirrored images, soundscapes, and responses to others. The women in my reading group do not know “exactly how it feels.” This is impossible. Yet they have in some way asked, “What if this happened to me?” and felt the *as if*, experienced in their flesh something akin to what I would have felt in mine.

Stefan’s reflections prompted in me a deeper reflection upon the poem, and the incident which provoked it, and upon the odd fact, noted but not really reflected upon, that in this arena of loving sex, the most embodied and least academic in my ongoing adult life, my relaxed mind presented me with words in a visual form, *pictures* of words presented almost as visual bodies without their attached meanings, and then with the narrative spiritual associations they conjured up. In responding empathically, Stefan re-

vealed to me something of the larger somewhat ironical and paradoxical interconnectedness of my own thought processes.

His reflections also prompt thought on metaphors—mirroring in “Duane and Anne,” resonance in “Bob’s Janey.” The musical metaphors have been until now passive ones—responding to the strings of a piano being tuned. But the interaction between Stefan and me, poet and reader mutually influencing each other, evokes more the actual playing of a duet upon the two instruments. Or better a duet between two lutes, for we are both, after all human and both academics (though the image is an obvious one—too obvious to make a decent poem, at least in my hands). This obvious contrapuntal aspect suggests the conscious analogical processes of empathy which have not been at all the focus of this chapter. The genuine aptness of the metaphor for this current chapter is that it includes both the unintentional harmonics, the overtones and undertones animating the strings which are *not* being actively played. A single note played upon a lute moves a string on the second instrument, more softly, which resonates in turn within a different string on the first lute, though now too softly to be audibly heard. In the midst of any complex piece of music there are entire unwritten and even un-noticed chords occurring on strings both unplayed and played which nonetheless enter our ears, which send muted but real flashes of electro-chemical energy across our synapses, and which colour vitally the experience of the music.

The metaphor breaks down, however, in a way which relates back to the differences in definitions of empathy. The attempt to make meaning *explicit*, with its allied beliefs in our ability to more or less fully comprehend, is still present in much academic writing on empathy, especially in the sciences, and this long exposition itself most likely errs in that direction. Yet the paradoxically explicit point of much of the cited research, is that—in the original experiences which motivated these poems, in the nuances of words and their associations, in the interactions with the people whose behaviours were the focus of those words, in the reading, and in the hearing, and in receiving back the complex responses of others, and in responding in turn to them—the resonances of overtones and undertones may well play a larger role than the willed explicit notes. My interchanges with Stefan suggest, however, that this is only one side, or only one aspect, of the questions around the roles of passive reaction and agency.

CASE STUDY II: ON GENTLY FREEZING

On Sending Out Our Kids Again

George McWhirter

“Sugar and spite
make everything night.”

*(A plea for an end to child sacrifice to the gods,
for Karen Cooper)*

Why should we dress them up
and send them out on Sunday
or any other day?

Why should we lay the inverted barnacles
of our children's ears on the rock of ages
to be smashed?

Be it

the sober grey serge

of Presbyterian granite. Or Jesuit
obsidian. Or pure Koranic chalk, made from the snow
of protozoa in the Persian Gulf.

Or basalt that seeps— to my
Ulster eye— like O'Neil's blood into the slim strands
of Strangford Lough,

as rag-endy

as the wrist he slashed off

and the hand he flung like a son
ahead of him to touch shore first, telling all
of his immortal will to win
over a Scottish giant
in this wee wager
of an ocean race.

But what can the astonished
gashes of our children's mouths report, but burial? The gags
are these gross convulsions of folded stone
that resemble us in bed,

which must play

their hard copulations backwards
at minus ten billion motions
to the moment
to get hot
with the engendering
again.

The smile crossing
our children's faces is the cosmic splash, the hit movie

we have waited all of time for at the box-office,
 the blockbuster in the Hollywood
 on Broadway.

These dimpled chins are not made to be our animated glyphs,
 our impertinent messages written

in their infant skin

for God, but God's kisses turned into lips that wet our cheeks.

Waddling, falling, gasping, snuffling,

they come asking us

to wipe their noses, change

their sodden socks, un-mummify

them from their muddy-buddies.

Let us get up off our asses and our knees. Find baby Buddha,

Jesus and Mohammed their Huggies.

Stop stuffing their genitals

with gelignite, sending them out

into the street, to knock on our neighbours' doors,

begging for a fistful

of poisoned

Halloween candies

to make their visit worthwhile.

While at my friend Norah's house for coffee some years ago, I picked up the latest issue of *National Geographic* from her countertop. The cover appeared to depict a doll with a golden face, a bright artefact set against a black background. Bold, white words in inch-high type—"INCA SACRIFICE"—caught my attention next, then immediately above and leading into that line, and in somewhat smaller red type, "Discovered High in the Andes—Haunting Remains of an" I opened to the page indicated by a small number and flipped through the article, scanning the photographs, catching the large title captions and some of the smaller captions. The image on the title page was a head shot, well lit; the next two pages showed an array of artefacts, some gold, and one larger one which looked like another doll. The cover image, it became clear, *was* a doll, but the head shot and larger artefacts were the bodies of children. As I continued, I felt the magnetic fascination of the dead, but also confusion. I found the images beautiful, even seductive, but that beauty confounded my emotions of horror and disgust about these dead children, who had been sacrificed. I also experienced a visual confusion about the scale of the objects in the photographs. I borrowed the magazine and later that day read the article in detail, moving rapidly from indignation to anger (Reinhard and Maria Stenzel 1999), though it took me some time to sort through what aspects of the article were contributing to that anger.

Alongside these strong emotions ran a further strand of confusion, now not so much around the photographs or the text, but around my reactions: why, or perhaps *how*, was I indignant about this article? A series of questions took shape: "Given the apparent cultural sensitivity of the dig itself and the resulting article, why did I still believe something was fundamentally wrong?" "What was there about an archaeological dig and the 500-year-old objects it unearthed which carried any current ethical weight at all?" And finally, "What did I want—what would *I* have changed?"

This Case Study explores these questions, focussing throughout upon the unearthed bodies. Following a process similar to that of the "average" *National Geographic* reader, we'll flip through the images (especially those of the victims), observing their overall impact, namely that the sacrificial nature of the victims is downplayed in favour of a presentation of their bodies as beautiful and beautified artefacts. Far from countering this effect, the captions, titles, and body text act to further obscure any unpleasant or

traumatic implications. Moreover, the descriptions and explanations offered within the body text work actively to justify the original events as understood by the author.

Discourses of cultural sensitivity and ethnographic description provide potentially positive explanations for the form of this article. Other vectors, including the professional and material, suggest less benign influences. An alternative or addition to these explanatory ideas arises from definitions of denial and repression emerging from cognitive and analytic psychology. They prove to be powerful descriptive and explanatory tools. The ethical relevance of this definitional choice leads in turn to the ongoing definitional problems surrounding religious human sacrifice—these issues plausibly arise at least in part from elisions and denials which support a description in which only *others* commit this type of sacrifice. This analysis in turn supports a broadening application of both denial and sacrifice to current social and political realities.

Finally, in answer to the question, “What do I want?” I suggest visual and textual alternatives, based in the same events and objects, which would produce an article much less prone to obfuscation, and far more to self-examination and personal engagement.

Some Points about Photographs and Text in *National Geographic*

Edmundo Desnoes suggests that “The analysis or contemplation of photographs as objects in themselves, independent of their context, outside the system of social circulation, is an illusion, a methodological trap” (1995, 311). The photographs in *National Geographic* are often luscious, and can certainly attract contemplation as objects in themselves. However, material aspects of the production of photographs for *National Geographic Magazine* articles and the ways in which those articles are typically read both argue for the primacy of photography in the realms of production and consumption. 53% of readers look only at photographs and their captions; most of the remainder read the body text only after doing so (Lutz and Collins 1993, 65). Perhaps for this reason, the visual layout of *National Geographic* articles, including the photographs, titles and captions, is accomplished with some reference to the writer, photographer, and relevant experts (79), but often with “relatively little contact between the writer and photographer” after

the initial meetings to assign the story, granting to the photographers and layout artists, and thereby to the photographs, a particular freedom and stature (55).

I indeed experienced this article in the usual order, noting pictures and captions first, the body of the article after. However, in the case of this article, there is a seamless quality to the textual treatment of this material in the titles and captions, and within the article body text, wherein they support each other to a remarkable degree in tone and seeming intent. In the sections below, therefore the articles, captions, and text will all be treated together under the headings of several themes.

DIGRESSION: WHO DOES WHAT IN THE ARTICLE?

About the body text of the article, I can say, "Rienhard claims *x*." About the photographs, I could say, "Stenzel has framed the shot in *y* way." However, "the article as a whole acts to *z*," suggests a level of agency I'm not willing to grant to this particular artifact of human production. Still this is the only compact way to describe the action or potential result of the work of the horde of anonymous caption writers, layout artists, and editors who are responsible for the final form of this article.



The Treasures

A majority of both the text and the images in this article can be meaningfully grouped under several discourses or themes: the idea of treasure, the concept of the explorer, ethnographic texts, and the admixture of other discourses within the ethnographic texts.

Much theorizing around photographs has to do with their special relationship to reality. From at least Walter Benjamin forward, there is a recognition that the photograph's seemingly artless portrayal of reality grants it a particular power, though already in Benjamin the "authenticity" of the reproduction is compromised by its complex relationship to "the original" (Benjamin 1968, 220-224). Barthes describes photographs variously as pure denotation (1961, 18) or as a first order of signification (1956, 101-2). Desnoes insists that this special relationship to reality is itself real, that "the existence of the photographic

The limitation of “man” from “humans in general” to “male humans” has a consequence I don’t enjoy in my reading of older texts of great value. While the shift to gender neutral language is, on the whole, a great improvement, and while disruption can be a very good thing, under the influence of newer texts, I am ever less able to read older texts, even those intended to reflect upon the human condition in general, without a momentary and disruptive act of translation back into that older mode.

camera allows man’s *[sic]* intervention to be reduced to a minimum” (1995, 310). Each of these thinkers appears to be describing both an aspect of photography, which distinguishes it from painting

or sculpture, while at the same time acknowledging a degree of artifice. Perhaps more critical to this current discussion is that most of us tend tacitly to assume this directness of representation, a minimal artistic distance between the object of the photograph and the photograph itself, and as a result, we grant photography a particular authority which can then be used or misused by those who frame and present the photographs to us, depending on context, captions, and audience.

The photographs for this article inhabit two different visual universes, artfully composed spreads and shots in a more documentary or journalistic vein. The spreads comprise seven large compositions filling eleven pages counting the cover, out of twenty-one pages all told, again including the cover. The front cover sets the tone. The cover of any issue of *National Geographic* is instantly recognizable. While certain details of font and placement have changed with time, the strong yellow frame has not. The text to the left immediately signals two primary aspects of *National Geographic*’s approach to this topic: “Discovered High in the Andes” highlights the aspect of adventure (which we’ll examine shortly), while “Haunting Remains” evokes the dead bodies. But a striking form against a dark background dominates the space inside the frame: the upper chest, face, hair, and head-dress of a figure, turned and angled slightly to one side. At first glance, given a certain familiarity with Egyptian archaeology, this form could be a mummy with a golden face mask, but something about the scale doesn’t work; the threads in the fabric are too large, and despite the “Inca Sacrifice” caption below the face, I see “doll” right away. The image itself is very beautiful. At the top, delicate feathers flare like a halo. A black coil of hair rises above the gold mask to a gold headpiece with a small coral-coloured ornament. I read the face as male, symmetrical; the earlobes have huge holes in them, reminiscent of those I’ve seen in other *National Geographic* pages of African women who have deliberately stretched their lobes through inserting larger and larger items. Around the neck is a sort of gold and red muffler, and below that the top of a natural fibre

garment. The lighting is exquisitely filtered, bringing out the warmth of the blacks, golds, reds. The golden face is lit from two wide angles to the right and left, and bright highlights mark the eyes, nose, and one side of the mouth.

The next image for this article (37), which fills the entire right page of the opening spread, is the head shot in profile of an Incan mummy. The hair and spun garment are eerily like those of the cover doll. The face looks like that of an old woman, dry and wrinkled, not dead but asleep. Her hair curves back around her cheek and then under her chin. A small piece of something green adheres just below her left nostril, which at first glance looks a little like dried mucus, but not quite. The lighting is amber from the front, filling the face and garments with warmth, but clear and white from behind, highlighting the body's black braided hair.

While the similarities in construction between the cover and this first spread suggest links between human bodies and dolls, the next composition (38) explicitly equates them at the visual level. At the top left is a necklace—it looks like some kind of shell—then a title and block of text. Across the bottom of the page are arrayed a series of small artefacts: two small red stone animals, one larger black one, and two small human-like figures, one of which is clearly the same as the one on the cover. Finishing the line is what again looks like a rag doll, whose image begins on the left page, and fills the right. The figure is seated; it looks flopped, with its head on its knees, its hands at its side.

This time, however, the scale seems wrong in the other direction—the details indicating that the artefact is too large to be a doll—and sure enough the text tells us that this is an eight-year-old boy, though this fact is indeterminable from the image as presented to us. The lighting from the right, the front this time, again is white, while the lighting from the left is more gold. The layout is striking, with the dominant rich coral reds carrying the eye in an arc through the objects and around the text. A touch of gold also appears in each assemblage as well, and is emphasized in the colours of the text.

The body in the next spread (48), on the left page, is less obscure. The face is charred, and the form looks like a girl child. The burning shines like charred barbeque in the strong light. The lighting of the body is again similar to that of the preceding images, warmer to the left, and brighter to the right. A

title and body of text run across the top of the right page. Below the text is a bag covered in bright coppery red feathers, but in a scale which renders the bag almost as large on the page as the girl's body, once again visually equating the human and non-human artefacts.

The next two spreads (50-1, 52-3) are also of artefacts: a stunning tunic, shoes, a statue. Finally, the article closes with a spread (54-5) dominated by the first body, a full image this time. She looks as if she is reclining against a wall, her knees crossed, her head bowed. She looks even more as if she is asleep. The lighting again warms her from the front, highlights her beautiful hair from behind. She is clearly older than the other two children, and somehow we know she's bigger.

Desnoes describes the least deceitful photographs as those which occur in a political paper, like *Granma*, "the official organ of the Cuban Communist Party," because we understand the context: that "these everyday images correspond to a well-defined, consciously motivated social plan" (1995, 315). The photographs he mentions from *Granma*, can in this sense be described as "frank" (Barthes 1964, 33). While Desnoes is referring, for example, to documentary photographs of workers in fields, Barthes' label applies as well to advertising.

These *National Geographic* compositions openly reveal themselves as designed. The images in all of them are arranged against black backgrounds, and the lighting effects, while subtle, are not hidden, and in fact are quite consistent from one image to another. Given the differences in scale, some digital or other manipulation has clearly occurred. When Barthes states the following, he takes a liberty I am unwilling to take: "... In advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; the signifieds of the advertising message are formed *a priori* by certain attributes of the product and these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible" (33). I am not willing to assign conscious intention to the layout artists; however, the most obvious impression is that no substantial formal distinction is made between the children's bodies and the other artefacts displayed. In fact, from the cover and right through the spreads, the bodies are laid out in such a way as to emphasize their resemblance to the other items shown. The dramatic lighting, bright and always oblique, is similar. The titles are all in a medium terra cotta, the smaller texts are all in a pale gold, further emphasizing the warm tones of both types of images. The bod-

ies are scaled down far more than the artefacts; at no time are they represented together in the same scale. When they occur on the same page, they are in a line, or side by side. The larger visual structure of the article, with its intermixing of the non-human and human remains, emphasises the identity between the objects. If I *were* intentionally trying to advertise this supposed identity, I could hardly do better.

Despite their openly designed nature, however, these spreads work far more actively than Barthes' advertising poster of pasta and sauce to hide certain aspects of the reality of even the photograph shoot itself. With respect to the final spread, we learn that the larger girl had an ornate head-dress and beautiful tunic, and that she has been unwrapped at some point at least enough to show her hands (45), which are not visible in the photos of her. The chronology in the text makes it plain that we are seeing this figure after these events, so she has been re-covered. We also know that the bodies have had their tissues sampled and their organs scanned (50). Her hair falls forward, partially obscuring her left eye; it has been arranged differently for this photograph than for the one on the title page. One can't help imagining the photographer or an assistant trying out various effects with the braided tresses. The overall impact is a realization not just that these images are carefully placed, lighted, and primped (which is not hidden by the layout of the piece) but a recognition of other possibilities, of harsher light perhaps, or of the bodies uncovered or naked.

These bodies, however, are not just any artefacts. The framing of each item in the spreads by its black background, the lighting, and the emphasis on gold tones all suggest an aesthetic of the precious. Each of these aspects is reminiscent of the presentation of very precious objects in a museum or at an expensive jeweller's shop. The bodies, no less than the dolls and figurines and feather bags, are treasures.

Image captions form a special liminal category of text in their tight attachment to specific photographs. In "The Photographic Message," Barthes describes "an important historical reversal" with respect to the press photo captions by which "the image no longer *illustrates* the words; it is now the words which, structurally, are parasitic on the image The reversal is at a cost: in the traditional modes of illustration the image functioned as an episodic return to the denotation from a principle message (the

text) which was experienced as connoted since, precisely, it needed an illustration... ” (1961, 25). Given that the production of *National Geographic* articles and the average *National Geographic* reader’s processes both privilege the images, Barthes’ descriptions of captioning can more properly be applied to the compound whole of all the texts of this article. Under this description, *National Geographic* has carried the process of making text dependent upon or at least subservient to, photography even further. Still, according to Barthes, this text has power; it acts to “anchor” the meaning of the image, which otherwise can “float” endlessly, since “all images are polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a ‘floating chain of signifieds’, the reader able to choose some and ignore others”(1964, 33). This anchoring is repressive and ideological, it limits the possible interpretations of the given image, and “remote controls” the reader “towards a meaning chosen in advance” (1964, 40).

With respect to the bodies and the other artefacts in this article, the textual cues emphasize the view of these bodies as artefacts of high value. The caption leading down word by word into the title on the first page of the article tells us:

At/22,000/feet/Children/of/Inca/Sacrifice/Found/Frozen/in/Time.

“Frozen in Time” is in larger type, and is in fact the title of the article. “22,000 feet” suggests the rigours of exploration, but the text below the title suggests again the treasured aspect in the view of these bodies. “Five Centuries after Inca Priests sacrificed three children on a peak in Argentina, archaeologists find them frozen to near perfection, accompanied by breathtaking textiles and artefacts” (title and caption 36). The bodies and the artefacts are lumped together in this subtitle. But these objects, bodies or dolls or feather bags, not just historical artefacts, they are treasures. The children are frozen “to perfection”; the artefacts are “breathtaking.”

The textual aspect of the story expresses the treasure-like quality of all the artefacts, with the human bodies as their acme. The captions for the small boy and small girl further this impression in a concentrated way, as they move seamlessly from issues of relevance to the children or their physical bodies—he may have been volunteered by his parents, or may have been taken from them, she still smells of charred flesh from a lightning strike—into descriptions of the artefacts which accompanied them. The

text beside the small boy allows that, "Richly wrapped Inca child sacrifices were more than just gifts to the god. They were ambassadors..." (caption 38), or to put this in reverse, a richly wrapped sacrificed child is a *treasured* gift to the gods, as well as an ambassador. The body text also emphasizes the precious nature of these bodies. The doll-like figures in gold and stone "increased by half the world's known collection of clothed Inca statues" (caption 52), but the two female mummies are even more precious, since they were only the second and third found, thereby *tripling* the world store of "well-preserved Inca female mumm[ies]" (43). Two of the bodies exhibit the value of unmarred works of art, since they are, as mentioned, "frozen to near perfection" (title page caption 36), and the small boy's arms, hands and feet are in "excellent condition" (40). By contrast, the author experiences "dismay" when he realizes that the third mummy is not so intact, "the outer covering was charred: The mummy had been struck by a lightning bolt" (46). Indeed, this mummy's "ear, shoulder, and chest" have been "marred" and "she still smells of charred flesh." Still, the rest of her body is in "excellent condition" (caption 49). In short, "[The author] doubt[s] that more perfectly preserved mummies will ever be found." With each new body, the author "would experience the pulse quickening that comes with a landmark discovery" (41), in addition to which he felt a sense of relief (with the first mummy, the little boy), because, by contrast, an earlier find had yielded a mummy with its head blown off by "treasure hunters" (42-3).

The texts predominantly serve in this case specifically to further de-nature these bodies *as dead bodies of children*, rather than to make explicit their physical nature. This process, even in Barthes' description, is circular rather than one way. While the text works to control the meaning of a photo, the photo also "innocents" the text, since a caption "appears to duplicate the image." The text thereby participates in the "iconographic" status of the photo with all the implications of frankness of denotation mentioned above (1961, 26). Nonetheless, Barthes points out that the shift in the direction of denotation leads to a situation whereby "it is not the image which comes to elucidate or 'realize' the text, but the latter which comes to sublimate, patheticize or rationalize the image" (1961, 25), all descriptions which apply to this article. The face of a child, with the pacifying drugs still below her nose, is sublimated under "frozen to near perfection." If "Go Gently" doesn't patheticize a sacrificed child's body, nothing does.

And even the dismaying damage to one of the precious artefacts—the girl stricken by lightning—is rationalized by the easier access it gives us to her tissues.

The “innocenting” of the photographs by the text is further aided by the style of the text.

Caption writers are expected to produce lively, literate, and concise copy aimed at readers of high-school level. They avoid both “academic” writing and highly informal constructions. The *Geographic* captioning style is distinctive, we were told, in comparison with the typically brief art photography captions. The *Geographic* caption is expansive, allowing for the inclusion of much information, and its style is often lyrical, even ornate. (Lutz and Collins 1993, 79-80)

The captions for this article are indeed expansive, and often lyrical. The positioning of the language, neither too academic, nor too common, lends a sort of dignified common language air to the texts. They read something like a passionate high school teacher’s discourse on a topic of particular interest. We can trust this discourse; it isn’t speaking over our heads, but the information, while not technical, is still reliable.

Without assigning intent, I can yet assert that the captions and other texts do act with some power in the direction of anchoring the message of these spreads, controlling us away from viewing these bodies as victims, dead children killed as sacrifices, and toward a vision of them as precious artefacts, treasures from a hard won trove.

If we are successfully guided away from seeing the children’s bodies as once-living human bodies like our own, the empathy we have is that same empathy we have toward a sculpture or painting. We might have the mental echo of the bodily sensation of sleeping with our head on our drawn up knees, for example. However, this is a sensation denuded of other echoing emotion. And the presentation of these children, in text and image, is such that we might feel less of any empathy at all, but rather more of fascination, or interest, or desire, or whatever we might tend to feel toward treasures in general.

The Explorers

If the artefacts, including the bodies, are treasures, those who seek them out are portrayed in both pictures and text as adventurers and explorers. The photographic narrative of this particular exploration is told in the documentary photographs which share the run of the body text, and appear more journalistic in tone. All appear to be shot with natural light, though one is a time lapse image. Most are apparently un-

posed. These photographs, all appear, in the Barthes-ian sense, to tell “frankly” a particular story of an exploration, a grand adventure. This focus on adventure is a defining characteristic of *National Geographic*. Gero and Root (1996, 79-80) point to the tendency of articles in *National Geographic* to focus not upon the archaeology, but upon the archaeologist as explorer: “The editorial emphasis is on the quest: the quest in which one must be first, and for which one must traverse great distances...” (Gero and Root 1996, 539-40).

Every documentary photograph in this section includes either the men* themselves or their tents or vehicles. They are informational in style, and the story they tell is of the exploration, the adventure, the discovery.

*Most of the photos are clearly of men. While a female archaeologist is mentioned in the text, she does not seem to appear in any of the photos.

These are professionals: delicately brushing pebbles away from an artefact (40), measuring carefully with a bright yellow tape (twice) (41, 45). These are people at work: pushing a truck (43), lifting a bucket half-full of rock (45), scrambling over bigger rocks (43). Most especially, this is a hostile environment; every photograph makes plain that we are seeing a high cold location, if not by showing the snow and rocks (40, 42,43,45, 47) then through the clothing the men are wearing (thick down jackets while pushing a truck (43), jackets and hats *inside* their tent (44)). Their tents are pitched by a partially frozen pond on a barren height (44). These men will do anything: one of them is being lowered head first into a hole (46). Only one of these photographs has a clear picture of a mummy (47). The un-posed, more natural appearance of these photographs contributes strongly to the sense that they are *frank*, indeed, and thereby closer in some way to reality.

This sense that photographs present at least an analogue of reality leads to particular ways of interpreting them which have the paradoxical effect of removing them from especially their historical situatedness with its political implications. As a result, the “reader’s argumentativeness cedes to the organic pleasure afforded by the aesthetic ‘rightness’ or well-formedness (not necessarily formal) of the image” (Rosler 2003, 268). This accession to the sense of reality makes it even harder to argue with the photographs, and with the texts which accompany them, and are innocented by them.

Certainly, aspects of the production of these photographs are screened from the reader. The presence of the photographer, Maria Stenzel, is barely acknowledged. She is merely credited in the table of contents and on the title page of the article, and mentioned as a frequent contributor in the tiny print footnote on the first page of text. Clearly she underwent the same rigours as the rest of the team, and she must have faced significant technical difficulties in the harsh cold of the site, and again in photographing the frozen bodies in the lab, yet her part in the story is otherwise unmentioned, even in the captions.

DIGRESSION: SUPPRESSING THE EXISTENCE OF PHOTOGRAPHERS

This failure to take much notice of the photographer appears standard in *National Geographic*. One of Ms. Stenzel's photos from this article was included in a Special Members' Edition of the magazine, *National Geographic: 100 Best Pictures* (Stenzel 1999, 115). The introduction to the book lauds the "... women and men who have journeyed virtually everywhere in the world to bring back photographic images for our members," recognizing that this entails, "sometimes risking their lives [or] suffering injuries from shrapnel to shark bites..." (*Special member's edition: 100 best pictures* 2001, 5). However, the title page of the relevant section, "The Seekers," and the subtitle, "Going to Extremes," turn the attention back to the adventurous explorer even to the exclusion of the supposed heroes of this particular book, the photographers. The Introduction to this section, too, while it mentions the photographers, focuses upon the explorers. I had to think of, and then look for, the photographers' credits. Their names are listed at the bottom of each page, in small type below a line. There are twenty-four photographs in this section, sixteen of which are in situations related to this photo shoot by exposure or danger or difficulty. For only two of them are the photographers mentioned in the captions, while for twelve, the explorer or expedition director are mentioned in the captions. True to *National Geographic* form, Johan Reinhardt, not Maria Stenzel, is the one mentioned in the caption accompanying Ms. Stenzel's photograph.



About this photograph-dominated article with its innocented text, I find I definitely want to argue. In the quote near the end of the section above, Johan Reinhardt makes an interesting distinction. While he views the artefacts, including the bodies, as treasures, and he clearly hunts them, *he* equally clearly is

NOT a “treasure hunter.” But in what does his exclusion from this category consist? Perhaps it is a matter of degree, or process. He doesn’t directly sell the pieces; they do wind up in museums, or freezers; he may have some anthropological interest in the Inca. But what motives might drive others to seek mummies at these dangerously high altitudes? Extreme poverty, perhaps, and the chance to sell artefacts to Western treasure collectors. Without those collectors, and I know at least one, there would be no market at all for the goods, other than the national governments who simply can’t afford to pay market prices. Reinhard’s expedition appears very well-equipped. Are the local seekers well-funded, well-equipped, their safety in the circumstances similar to his?

Reinhard is hunting treasured artefacts, he is being paid, and he is gaining fame. His treatment of the artefacts alone, including the bodies, as treasures, fits seamlessly with the treatment of the digging team, and especially of the author himself, as a treasure hunter. If this were a movie, he’d be Indiana Jones, the academic who explores for treasures of unspeakable value, and, by the way, religious import.

This emphasis on adventure and discovery is by no means exclusive to *National Geographic Magazine*. *Archaeology* (“A publication of the Archaeological Institute of America”) has at the very top of its front cover, as a banner above its title:
“ADVENTURE • DISCOVERY • CULTURE • HISTORY • TRAVEL”
 (Archaeology 2003, cover, emphasis mine)

Which suggestion points to a further significant omission: the author’s description in this issue runs as follows: “Anthropologist

Johan Reinhard is an explorer-in-residence at *National Geographic*.” Nowhere in this issue of the magazine does one find a mention that he is *Doctor* Reinhard, a Ph.D. anthropologist with numerous academic institutional connections, whose current research focuses on “sacred beliefs and cultural practices of mountain peoples” (Reinhard 2002). These exclusions are the more noteworthy since their inclusion would presumably lend credence to the extensive theorizing by Dr. Reinhard about the beliefs and practices relevant to this site.

But Reinhard’s status as an academic is at best irrelevant to his image as explorer, and at worst a hindrance. In common thought, does “academic” conjure up an explorer, or the nerd at a desk my road-crew co-workers used to assume, who had never done a hard day’s work? “Photographer,” rings of the contemporary and the technical. “Explorers” aren’t, or aren’t primarily, academic or technical. And even

when someone is on an adventure, seeking treasure, he is also not, at least in *National Geographic*, a treasure hunter, but an explorer only.

Even with respect to the religiously sacrificed children, the most apparently frank description in both the photographs and the text is a chronological documentary story of their bodies' discovery. In this respect, the captions for the body text photographs, and the body text around the discovery of the mummies, have a similar feel to the body text photographs themselves. The photos with their captions appear to be roughly chronological and are informational, describing the course of the exploration, clarifying the activity: the young man is being lowered to retrieve a mummy from an "especially tight spot" (46); the mummy is being wrapped with dry ice (47).

But this documentary story has a particular flavour. It is the story of adventure, exploration and discovery. More specifically it reads like a treasure hunt in austere and trying lands. Hence it especially emphasises the difficulties encountered by the explorers. Text, captions, and a labelled photograph all further emphasize the extreme height ("Discovered High in the Andes" (cover), "at 22,000" (Table of Contents)), the lengthy climb (15), the difficulties in working at high altitudes ("Digging takes a titanic effort, but even taking notes is hard at 22,000 feet" (caption 49), "As we worked, our fingertips became raw" (43, pullout text at top of page)), the risks ("One member of the group developed life-threatening pulmonary and cerebral edema. Only a hurried descent to a much lower level saved him" (44)).

The story of this quest is indeed an exciting one of difficulties overcome, fortitude shown, a bright treasure recovered, for the good of all the living who are concerned. As we travel through this quest we are invited by text and image to empathize with the explorers, and especially with Dr. Reinhard during his climb and "13 arduous days on the summit" (43). We can feel the excitement at the first hint of success, the worry for our colleague with cerebral edema. We can sense in our mind's muscle the exertion of hiking up the hill or what it's like to dangle upside down, with hands grasping our ankles. We can sense on our mind's skin the dry stinging cold when the "windchill temperature dropped to minus 35°" (45).

These extreme difficulties do generate one note of empathy with the Inca, but it is with the sacrificers only: "The conditions only increased my respect for what the Inca had accomplished—not only digging the graves but actually building structures more than four miles up..." (45). However, within this particular situation, that empathy is not allowed to co-exist with empathy for the dead children, but rather is often accomplished at the expense of the possibility of feeling their anxiety or anticipation, feeling on our mind's skin the cold as they hiked up the mountain, or in our mind's muscle the increasing torpor under the onset of drugs. The end result is that the bodies of these children, already equated with treasured artefacts, are further denatured, or, at a minimum, again shifted in their import. Even in the more documentary discourse of the journalistic photographs and the related texts, the children's bodies do not tell a story about their own real circumstances, past or present, but rather about the difficulties overcome, first by their sacrificers, but most especially by the brave explorers seeking these treasures.

The Ethnography and Reinhard's Personal Comments

A third discourse within the article can be broadly described as ethnographic. It consists of all the comments that assert or guess at the culture and motivation of the Incan community involved in these sacrifices. It is worth remembering that "the Inca left no written history. Most of what is known of their culture comes from early Spanish accounts and archaeological finds such as these" (38, caption). Presumably, these sources give credence to confident assertions that a "tunic was worn only by nobility" (51, caption), or that the articles accompanying the children are variously intended to accompany them on their "journey to the afterlife" (40) or as gifts to "ensure the fertility of their herds" (44), or as "an offering to the deity with whom, in death, the girl would reside" (9). The assertions and guesses together add up to an attempted ethnography of this identified Incan sacrifice. Much of this ethnography recounts the structures of society surrounding this sacrificial practice, including the Incas' use of sacrifice to build and strengthen the ties between the far-flung parts of their empire.

The tone of most of this speculation is recognizable as an attempt to describe, as if in their own terms, known and guessed at features of this geographically and temporally distant society. These texts

are naturalistic in style, positivistic in outlook, "We can know and describe this culture, at least to some extent," might be a summary of the presuppositional bias. Serious critiques have been mounted against naturalism and realist narrative in Western ethnography (Atkinson and Coffey 1995; Gero and Root 1996). Lutz and Collins make a similar criticisms about the naturalist photographs in *National Geographic* (1993, 280). However, if one wants to communicate, a recognizable language and form are necessary (Atkinson & Coffey 1995, 55), and the naturalist forms of text and photographs are just such readable, comprehensible forms of language and image, familiar to a wide audience. Further, this sort of writing, however flawed, has contributed to a real increase in understanding of other cultures, and an incremental decreasing of negative cultural judgement and imposition (Atkinson and Coffey 1995, 49).

This form of description, then, could simply be granted as necessary in a magazine seeking to locate themselves somewhere between a popular and a technical audience. Though they vary in tone and vocabulary somewhat, the other popular magazines that situate themselves in this liminal category, such as *Archaeology*, *Scientific American* and *Discovery* all adopt a similar approach to both archaeology and ethnography. A great many of the ethnographic comments made by the author could be casually described as non-judgmental and culturally relative summaries of current thinking around the Inca and their sacrificial practices. The references to the after-world, and to the victims' and sacrificers' presumed understandings around their actions, could be read as simply an attempt to "get us into their head," and as a culturally sensitive avoidance of ethnocentrism.

Approaches to the Ethical Judgment of Others

Let's grant, then, that some form of ethnography is helpful. Further we can accept that that there have been, in the name of understanding others, "arrogant exaggerations" (Girard 1986, 65) leading to disastrous consequences. Are we thereby committed to a thoroughgoing relativism about the actions undertaken by those separated from us by time, space, or habit? Clifford (Geertz 2000) is a foremost proponent of just this sort of cultural relativism. He has a subtle, warm-hearted, and not overly sentimental inclination toward difference and its exploration. He recognizes that cultures do clash, but argues that often

what is needed is “an imaginative entry into (and admittance of) an alien turn of mind” (82). I don’t think it is oversimplifying to summarize Geertz’s position regarding extreme relativism as, “In practice, it just doesn’t happen.”

The image of vast numbers of anthropology readers running around in so cosmopolitan a frame of mind as to have no views as to what is and isn’t true, or good, or beautiful, seems to me largely a fantasy. There may be some genuine nihilists out there, along Rodeo Drive or around Times Square, but I doubt very many have become such as a result of an excessive sensitivity to the claims of other cultures; and at least most of the people I meet, read, and read about, and indeed I myself, are all-too-committed to something or other, usually parochial. (46)

Science, law, philosophy, art, political theory, religion, and the stubborn insistences of common sense have contrived nonetheless to continue. (64)

While I am happy to grant that in practice, absolute nihilism prevails almost not at all, these dismissive comments utterly fail to grapple with the fact that one person’s common sense is another person’s foolishness, and one person’s religion (or lack of religion), however benign to the practitioner, is another’s heresy and worthy of death. As might be expected from the comments above, Geertz himself in practice simply asserts his own ethical stance with respect to other countries’ politics and economy: “[The rural population in Java] would be better employed elsewhere if there were an elsewhere to employ them and if there were mechanized means at hand to accomplish their agricultural tasks” (25). Or, “Large-scale, well-to-do farmers alongside impoverished, small-scale ones” constitute “social injustice” in Morocco (27). The point here is precisely *not* whether we agree with his assessments, but that he makes these presumptive assessments, despite presumably having admitted the “alien turn of mind.” Further these assessments are precisely those which must be made by specific people, aid workers for example, in determining whether and how to intervene in local economies.

In its emphasis on difference, this stance clearly gives us no help if, in the end, we *must* make any decision about an action or failure to act which affects those distanced from us by location, religion, or way of life, and we want a reasoned explanation for which areas we should intervene in, or what relative goods we are trying to promote for the sake of others. However, this is less troubling to Geertz, since the open-hearted ethnographic encounter with other cultures has as its primary value an enforced examination of our own: “The trouble with ethnocentrism is that it impedes us from discovering at what sort of an-

gle... we stand to the world; what sort of bat we really are” (Geertz 2000, 75). Geertz’s emphasis is on the attempt to understand, and our search for “imaginative entry” into the minds of others has as its goal not our judgment of them, but our understanding of ourselves. If difference absolutely prevails, then this is the only realistic goal. Its solipsistic narcissism renders decision-making about others either impossible or irrelevant, depending on how much one cares about the end results upon the others involved, particularly if a relationship of unequal power or dependency prevails.

Christopher Norris (1995) mounts a critique of the focus on otherness (alterity), arguing that it leads, for example, to Jean-François Lyotard’s inability to refute those who might deny the Holocaust. This results because “an ethics of absolute ‘difference’, ‘alterity’ or ‘otherness’

In every important way we are such secrets from each other, and I do believe that there is a separate language in each of us, also a separate aesthetics and a separate jurisprudence. Every single one of us is a little civilization built on the ruins of any number of preceding civilizations, but with our own variant notions of what is beautiful and what is acceptable—which, I hasten to add, we generally do not satisfy and by which we struggle to live. We take fortuitous resemblances among us to be actual likeness, because those around us have also fallen heir to the same customs, trade in the same coin, acknowledge, more or less, the same notions of decency and sanity. But all that really just allows us to coexist with the inviolable, untraversable, and utterly vast spaces between us. (Gilead, Robinson 2004, 197; Pamuk 2001, 235)

is one that in principle denies itself recourse to a *sensus communis* of shared human values and truth-seeking interests, a realm wherein the rival parties to any such dispute might hope to find some common ground of mutual intelligibility” (21). This sort of approach can further have an unintended result, “For it can all too easily undergo the change from an attitude of good-willed tolerant respect for the diversity of human values and beliefs to a paranoid outlook that defines the other as indeed an alien being...” (31).

Norris’s suggestions for an alternative theory are detailed and careful. The centerpiece, however, is that the presupposition to “discoveries” in human sciences is (quoting Davidson) “a working assumption that most of [others’] beliefs hold true,” that “if we want to understand others, we must count them right on most matters” (21). This theory assumes a level of similarity amongst humans which then enables contact, communication, and when necessary, ethical judgment, and includes the implicit assumption that we can, in fact, “understand others.” Yet Norris, like Geertz, offers in the end no help in determining which areas of similarity and which of difference are most relevant.

Further, as Geertz points out,

“... Moral issues stemming from cultural diversity... that used to arise; when they arose at all, mainly between societies—the “customs contrary to reason and morals” sort of thing on which imperialism fed—now increasingly arise within them. Cultural boundaries coincide less and less closely—there are Japanese in Brazil, Turks on the Main... —a shuffling process which has of course been going on for quite some time... but which is by now approaching extreme and near universal proportions” (2000,79).

These moral issues extend from the familial to the international. As I write this in 2006, Sikhs in Vancouver, British Columbia, are wrestling morally with the honour killing of a young woman who married against her parents’ desires, and Danish cartoons depicting Mohammed have sparked rioting not just in Copenhagen but throughout the Arab world as well. In response to these situations, *in practice*, the theorist or ethnographer or aid worker or imam or censor will need to sort out which areas of similarity and difference matter, and judge accordingly, because, *in practice*, decisions to act or not act must be made and those decisions have consequences.

Though I don’t much care for either of the choices above, I incline on balance toward Geertz’s blunt assessment of the incommensurability of ethical systems. Geertz at least points out that, in the end, we will at times judge, “as we must” (2000, 87).

However, absolute cultural relativism, regardless of its motivation, has some paradoxical effects. To treat others as if their moral decisions didn’t matter may be engendered by some form of respect or desire not to judge. However, this is to dehumanize them. Vetlesen argues that the Nazis did not treat the Jews as moral objects deserving of death for some moral flaw, but rather as nonmoral and therefore non-human, objects.

What matters is that it is morally right and morally demanded to treat the Jews, labelled *Untermenschen*, as devoid of moral status. In short, it is morally *prescribed* to treat a group of people, engendered within the moral universe as nonmoral objects, as objects entitled to no moral standing and possessing no moral rights whatsoever. (Vetlesen 1994, 192)

If we treat others as if they have no moral standing, we are required to draw completely different moral decisions about them from those we would take for ourselves. In the Nazi case, this allowed the treatment of genocide as a moral act. I am claiming an extension of Vetlesen’s point: that treating a group as if they have no moral standing can include treating them as if they have not only no rights, but also no moral responsibility in our eyes. If so then we are, at the level of moral perception, firstly, treating the Incas as the Nazis treated the Jews. Secondly, we can’t know that Incan adults treated the children they sacrificed

as non-moral objects—indeed, the reverse seems likely—but *we* are certainly doing so, if we adopt this stance.

The paradoxical impact of what began, in cultural relativism's case, as a well-motivated stance, is that,

if I am persuaded by societal forces around me... that this and that class of objects of perception are nonmoral objects, this persuasion may prove pre-emptive in the sense that it may help block the activation of my faculty of empathy Such blocking may produce effects nothing less than disastrous for the "objects" affected by the nonactivation of empathy. (Vetlesen 1994, 195)

Vetlesen's "forces" include "rigid stereotypy or abstraction of categories of others," but cultural relativism too promotes abstraction and non-moral labelling. Vetlesen has already discussed the ways in which moral perception is dependent upon empathy. His contention here, that the labelling of others as not subject to perception as moral objects may suppress empathy, has explanatory power relative to this *National Geographic* article. If empathy normally invokes moral judgments and their consequent actions, and if we are blocked in advance from making moral judgments about an entire group of people and their practices, then empathy indeed may be deactivated or at least curtailed. This, in fact, is precisely what happens in the strange hybridization of texts which occur within the article.

Hybrid Texts?

It is within the ethnographic discourse that one could reasonably expect depictions of scenarios which would allow or invite empathy with the lives and deaths of the children and their sacrificers. There is, however, another strand of speculation in the article, linked to the physical bodies themselves. These

Re: Eternity Bound—How do we know the gods don't just eat the children? Re: Chosen One—Which, the child or the feather bag? Re: Go Gently—As opposed to "Do Not Go Gently"? Not to worry; we made sure of the "gentle" part with the chicha. Is fury possible at the level of the writing of this dissertation? "Show, don't tell" is the creative writing response, but feels inadequate here.

guesses at first glance often appear ethnographic, but are seldom consistently restricted to a single tone. Rather, they are punctuated by

strange interjections, personal or aesthetic or scientific in tone, and sometimes all three. Take first the titles attached to the spreads of the small boy, the small girl, and the second spread of the larger girl: "Eternity Bound," "Chosen One," and "Go Gently" (38, 44, 45). Presumably Arcadio Mamani, one of Reinhard's team, a "proud follower of his family's traditions, which have roots in those of the Inca them-

selves,” who “is always the one to make offerings of food and drink to the mountain gods” (40) might actively believe in the import of these captions, in which case, he could use them without irony. It is possible that the caption writers, and final editors, also believe that the children were in fact chosen ones of the gods who have therefore gone gently into eternity. What seems more likely is that they are trying to guide our interpretation of these bodies toward those aspects of presumed beliefs of the children themselves and of their sacrificers, which would disturb us less than dwelling on the processes which led to them being where they now are.

Re: Arcadio Mamani from the team: How many of the Incan beliefs does he hold? Which of the practices does he engage in? If he is a proud inheritor of the traditions of the Inca, and approves all of them, are we to hold no moral opinion, to make no moral judgment, about this fact?

Within the body text, the suddenly exposed face of the smaller girl provokes this reverie:

After I got over the initial shock [of seeing her face], I had mixed feelings. I was saddened by her expression, a look that still seemed expectant, yet I was pleased that the lightning hadn't destroyed her. The girl's left ear, shoulder, and part of her chest were badly charred, which made it seem all the more remarkable that the rest of her frozen body was still in excellent condition. (46)

An aspect of the current material state of the child, her expression, is allowed to suggest her real live existence at some point, but we are instantly deflected. Indeed, far from dwelling on her expectancy at the time of her death, we are to be particularly glad about this excellent preservation, not just for the cultural knowledge we will gain, but due to its ties into another theme, that of medical science. Indeed the very charring which “marred” the small girl's body has turned into a “special blessing,” not just by revealing her face at the summit, but also because it “exposed deep tissues, making sampling easier” (caption 49). The condition of the bodies, including the “large quantity of frozen blood in them” may even “help combat diseases today” (50). We're allowed a brief moment of potential empathy, but hustled away into thoughts of Reinhard's pleasure, of the body's artefactual state—its “excellent condition,” and of her medical utility to us, the living.

In the final paragraph of the article, this same girl is described in more detail, including the fact that,

Her hands and feet were tucked into her clothes, as if she had been cold. Along with the two other children sacrificed on Lulluillaco, this gentle Inca girl has given us a rare opportunity to deepen our understanding of the lives and times of her people. (50)

While some sympathy for the child emerges from these comments, and a recognition that she may have at

The small boy goes almost unmentioned in the text. Harder for the author to sentimentalize, perhaps? Is this a gender issue? Would this author have called a boy "gentle"? Or is he damaged in some way which limits his treasure value?

one time been cold, it is not the girl, but we ("our understanding") who become the focus of the sen-

tence.

In any case, even this "gentle" comment by the writer, in its failure to engage the material realities not just of this child's death, but of her sacrifice by adults, feels sentimental rather than directly engaged with the child's possible personality or emotions. How do we know she was gentle? She may have been a whiny brat. She may have been an Incan sociopath. Her parents may have thought, "We have to give up one, why not this one?" If she looks gentle, what else could she have been, given the drugs and the stupefying cold at the time of her death? In other hands, linked to the "Go Gently" caption attached to the older girl, and the Dylan Thomas poem it evokes (with its demand that the dying one NOT go gently), this ironic reiteration could be a dark joke.

Three descriptions of the older girl raise additional issues:

Later, while we were preparing to put the mummy into the freezer at Catholic University in Salta, we examined her more closely. A hush fell over the room as I removed her head cloth, revealing her face. For an instant, time stopped while I stared in awe at her beauty. Her hair was stylishly braided, and she looked as if she were sleeping. But it was her hands, perfectly lifelike, that affected me most. (45)

Within the text we find a report about methods of sacrificial death:

Inca sacrifices reportedly died by being buried alive, by strangulation, or by a blow to the head The Llullaillaco children, however, have benign expressions and bear no obvious physical scars, suggesting that they died while unconscious or semiconscious, probably stupefied by a combination of ritual alcoholic drinks and altitude. (47)

On the whole, this is an attempt to describe the means of death in classically objective terms. It is, however, complemented by the final text in the article—the caption of the final spread—which is worth quoting in its entirety:

Faces of the dead can hold grimaces of pain, but the teenage girl wears a placid expression. Before death, all three children were probably unconscious from a combination of altitude and chichi—part of the plan, it seems, to send them into the next world undistressed. The children died expecting immortality, and in a sense they got it: With their organs and blood frozen in place, their DNA has survived unscathed and may point scientists to their present-day relatives. (54)

There is a significant dose of inconsistency in all of these approaches to these children, their dead bodies, and their beliefs about immortality. For example, why is Reinhardt sad? Perhaps the small girl looks expectant because she is an ambassador going to the gods, in which case, within the terms of the article, shouldn't Reinhardt be glad? On the other hand, if our focus is upon the presumed beliefs of the children and their sacrificers, then shouldn't we be sad, or even offended, at what is happening to them now. If they "died expecting immortality" and if the items about their bodies indicate a belief that these items are needed with them as they to the place of the gods, aren't we violating the desires of these children and their parents? Would they be comforted at achieving *this kind* of immortality? The idea that the goal of their unconscious state was intended to send them "undistressed" ignores the fact that their unconscious state denied them the chance to know what was happening to them, to face their own deaths. It was, of course, also extremely convenient for those instituting the sacrifice. We are never told precisely how they died, but to take a guess, can eight-year-olds, let alone teenagers, be relied upon to freeze to death without a struggle? Would their parents have been able to acquiesce had the children been more distressed?

The drugged children remind me of Himmler, who on Vetlesen's account instituted the gas chambers because a "more humane" method was needed. "More humane" for the Jews, perhaps, but Himmler took this decision when he realized that killing Jews by guns, especially given the number of women and children, exacted too great a toll on the soldiers, many of whom went mad, or committed suicide. (1994, 199-200)

In the end the texts which might have best enabled empathy with these children, are not just hybrid with respect to their subject and tone, but with respect to the focus of empathy as well. They tease us with empathy for these children, and then, in the variety of ways mentioned above, deflect us instead into empathy with the author, the other explorers, and with the broader horde of living recipients of benefits from this discovery. This dead Incan girl and the other children have been used not to help us toward any serious "understanding of the lives and times of her people" (50) but rather, through the emotional obfuscation of terms like "gentle" and "gently," to suggest a spurious empathy with the child while deflecting us from precisely any attempt to grapple with that broader understanding of the times and people.

Schizophrenic Texts?

As I read these texts, noting their constant switching of tone and inability to settle on any particular point of view, the label schizophrenic crosses my mind, in the common language sense suggested by “contradictory or antagonistic qualities or attitudes” (Merriam Webster Online). Reinhard’s “mixed feelings” quote above helps to crystallize confusion evidenced by this article. “I was saddened by her expression, a look that still seemed expectant, yet I was pleased that the lightning hadn’t destroyed her.” About which “her” is he pleased, the girl or the body as an artefact? The lightning didn’t destroy the living, expectant girl; the adults around her did. But Reinhard is saddened by the expression of a girl. Sadness about the artefact would be sadness at its damage, which in this situation could be desecration—or at least that is the tone of his outrage at treasure hunters who damage bodies. The “gentle” attribution fits here, too. We have no way of knowing she was gentle in character, so the only way in which she is gentle is in her inability to harm, which attribute resides entirely in the fact of her being dead, a body. But if this is just a dead body, why not show us photographs which emphasize this. Granted it might be too distressing to show the bodies being invaded, but why not some picture of the bodies in a clinical setting. Instead, the only photographs in which people look like they are involved in a scientific exercise show technicians with masks examining a large textile (51).

The article can be presumed to be following *National Geographic*’s official policy, “Only what is of a kindly nature is printed about any country or people” (Lutz and Collins 1993, 27), which extends not only to texts but to legends as well. “As one person in the legends department claimed, ‘We’re not in the business of offending people’” (81). This approach, however, is not just They have managed to offend me. Ethnography Lite, but ethnography as avoidance of judgment, or so it appears. Instead, this exclusion is by unintended implication a judgement by definition that what has been omitted is not “of a kindly nature,” and therefore judged by the omitters as negative in some way. In ordinary contexts, the failure to say something about someone else because it wouldn’t be kindly to do so, suggests at best that we are about to describe some weakness or failing, and at worst that they’ve committed a scandal, but we aren’t

going to talk about it. In other words, if we exclude a description of a behaviour for this reason, we are necessarily judging it.

This judgment by omission, however, doesn't simply disappear; it lurks at the edges of the texts, especially because these texts move beyond a mere attempt to describe either the bodies as artefacts, or the probable cultural context for these sacrifices. These sections of text, in other words, move beyond description, beyond even explanation, to an apparent justification. What is being justified? In the author's careful distancing of himself from treasure hunters: the author's desecration of these graves and of the bodies, and by extension, the desecration of any grave, because otherwise, the "real" treasure hunters will move in. In the invocation of sentimental hopes around the children's beliefs: the killing of these children and by extension other killings of children.

I am not shocked by the rapid change in the emotions of the author. It is perfectly possible to experience conflicting or contrasting emotions about an object or situation, to have logically paradoxical

We just *do* respond to dead bodies with a mix of emotions. We might, upon seeing a dead friend at a funeral home think, "I miss her so much," and "They did a good job with her makeup—she hasn't looked that good in years." I wear little makeup so this latter seems a likely comment when I die. We don't miss the body, we miss the friend. They haven't made up my friend; they have made up a body.

thoughts about one and the same set of circumstances. Indeed, in this situation mixed feelings, even very strong ones, seem inevitable. That the sentiments described might really be Reinhard's sentiments doesn't force me to accept them. Why not just say, "I make my name and my fortune because the children were sacrificed." There is nothing shocking to me in this, nothing reprehensible.

What is missing is a period. Just as this small girl's body is not allowed to exist in a proper scale in the spread, her expectancy is not suffered to inhabit an adequate textual space on the page. It shares that space without even a caesura, with the artefactual treasure she has become. And Reinhard's emotions, his sadness, his pleasure frame them both.

The strange engagement and disengagement of empathy in these texts, and what is revealed and obscured in the process, what is highlighted and what is de-emphasized are reflective of the development of the article as a whole. The statements of the article can be fairly summarized as followed.

1. They aren't dead children, they are treasured artefacts.

2. If we must look at them as children, they aren't dead, they are asleep.
3. If they must be dead, they didn't die in vain—at least they are serving some purpose.
4. If they were sacrificed, at least they died in comfort.
5. If they were sacrificed, at least they died expecting immortality, and by implication willingly.

These statements confuse, because, while they each represent a point of view which could be explored, they also all represent an avoidance, specifically, of exploring at the most basic level empathy with these children in the last days and moments of their lives.

But what is at stake in the denial of this empathy? One hint arises when we seek to focus more directly on the elusiveness of any clear definition of sacrifice.

Definitions of Sacrifice

As John Milbank shows, even theorists writing out of fundamentally Christian European backgrounds can formulate dramatically different definitions of sacrifice, with similarly diverse explanations emerging from those definitions, and with even the best of them, René Girard, failing to meet Milbank's definition even of specifically Christian sacrifice (1995, 40). The definitions in a classic work such as J. C. Heesterman (1993), by insisting on the destruction of the sacrifice—usually by fire, also exclude a large number of those sacrifices which most people, including most other theorists, would want to examine.

In the "General Introduction" to *Understanding Religious Sacrifice*, Jeffrey Carter (2003) addresses this problem directly. Carter mentions five types of theory and five large conceptual categories (9). He points out that different theorists address the parties (giver, gift, receiver), the meaning of the sacred, and the centrality of the victim (4-5). In his "Postscript" to this same book, after twenty-five disparate articles addressing all of the above concerns, he asks, "Why has there been such little common understanding when it comes to sacrifice" (449)? He posits a number of difficulties in coming to a single definition. These include the complexity of data, the "symbolic load" assigned to sacrifice beyond that as-

signed by the participants, the researchers' different ideas about religion, and selective focus on various aspects (449-51).

All of these are legitimate partial explanations, but the final two are of particular interest here. In addition, on the way to an alternative definition, I want to propose an additional issue, suggested by two sentences from Carter's introduction: "As scholars have compared religious phenomena from around the world in hopes of formulating a systematic understanding of religion, sacrifice has been particularly prominent, significant, and in many cases troubling. In short, it demands explanation and interpretation" (2). The passive here conceals a missing "us". Those practicing the sacrifice have already explained it for themselves; so their religious sacrifice demands explanation and interpretation for *whom* and from *whom*? Clearly for and from at least the thinking Western academics in this book; but presumably most English speaking readers of the article we are considering would also agree with the need for "explanation and interpretation" of human sacrifice.

One of the befuddling characteristics of what we call sacrifice is precisely that within other cultures, the myths and rituals, the religions around sacrifice which we find, at least on the surface, incomprehensible, are so natural as not to require justification. The myths which enable sacrifice are not "myths" to the participants, but more like what we call history or even science, means to describe and understand past events, and to predict and control future ones. The rituals, while often set aside from ordinary everyday life in most cultures, are deeply, intrinsically motivated and organic with the whole. The complex of beliefs and practices which we label religious (usually that which we believe smacks of belief in the "supernatural" in another culture) often bears a weight which more closely resembles our everyday or common sense "science"; this complex is explanatory and predictive and therefore interwoven with ongoing choices and decisions. This is precisely how Girard sees the sacrificial complex of behaviours, as universally informed by "a science of myths" (1986, 95-99).

DIGRESSION AND CAVEAT: THE FROG HELPER

To take a less traumatic example, Julie Cruikshank (1990, 57-62) includes the story of "Skookum Jim's Frog Helper," as related by Skookum Jim's niece in a part of her family history. A frog is helped from a

ditch, and a year later enters the house of the man who helped him, and by licking a terrible wound, heals him. Later still the man dreams of a woman who is really the frog, who discusses with him the way they have helped each other. Those who believe that the frog intentionally acted out of gratitude, and that her action was efficacious, will be inclined to help frogs and other animals. Most people around me might believe a man could help a frog, perhaps even that a frog could enter a house and lick a wound, and that the man might dream in some way about this. They would not, however, be inclined to see the story in the same way as a whole, and would tend therefore to label the frog's gratitude in the story as told as supernatural, any future instrumental frog-saving, based upon this story, as mythic, and any rituals to do with it as superstitious.



All of these observations taken together ought to alert us to the possibility that our own sacrificial practices may be naturalized within our everyday practice. When linked to the missing "for us," the apparent resistance of sacrifice to definition mentioned above points to the possibility that the problem is not so much a resistance to definition, but a need for a definition in which this sort of sacrifice is something performed by *anyone but us*.

It would be helpful to have a good summary term for this sort of approach, and indeed one exists: "denial." This term can refer to the broad phenomenon of the avoidance of unpleasant or anxiety-inducing realities and states: conscious or unconscious, willed or unwilled, external or internal. "Denial," "repression," and "negation" in their separately defined psychoanalytic senses are all important. "Repression" has particular appeal in ordinary English, particularly with its political overtones, but the range of meanings for "denial" in ordinary non-technical English seems more appropriate here. In particular, while one can be "in a state of repression," one can simply be "in denial" and this urges the use of this term, since it allows for an easy residence within the state, sometimes semi-permanent. Several more-technical psychological terms, "suppression" and "extinction" among them, could also apply. These terms in turn points to a more technical term, "anosognosia" (in Greek, a lack of knowledge of disease), which is the word one uses when a brain-damaged patient denies their clinical dysfunction (Blackwell Diction-

ary of Neuropsychology; s. v. "anosognosia"). Of interest for us here is the research showing that an individual's personality prior to brain injury strongly predicts the emergence and level of this particular form of denial. The earliest uses of this term, and its continuing common usages, applied to those have gone blind, but are unaware of it. This indeed seems an apt metaphor for this National Geographic article as a whole. Its denial, its profound blindness, while real, does not exist simply within the article, self-generated. It is the outcome of prior inclinations, individual, cultural, professional, material, and as such is unknown, unreferenced, hidden within the article itself. "Anosognosia," however, is awkward to say and hard to remember, so denial will stand for this complex of attitudes and behaviours. Under any of these headings, however, the article in question is not so much schizophrenic as it is in denial.

René Girard, who is perhaps the best known recent theorizer of sacrifice, focuses his thought on issues of denial, in a very specific way.

It is natural to assume that the best-concealed aspect of the generative mechanism will be the most crucial element, the one most likely to render the sacrificial system non-functional if it becomes known. This aspect will be the arbitrary selection of the victim, its essential insignificance, which contradicts the meaning accumulated upon its head by the scapegoat projections. (1977, 22)

Mimesis and scapegoating are the core of all sacrificial violence, and a fundamental denial of the randomness of the scapegoat is essential to the social efficacy of the act, so much so that the revelation of the denial can cause the entire sacrificial structure to collapse. This effect results from the intimate link between myth and sacrificial victimage, both of which are enfeebled as a society begins to consciously articulate the nature of religious sacrifice and to become in fact less religious (1979, 16). Nonetheless Girard's early work in particular exhibits anyone-but-us denial in a potent way. For example, he insists that the word "sacrifice" cannot be applied to both the sacrificial expulsion of Joseph by his brothers and to Judah's later willingness to die for that same brother. In the same section, he further insists that the "the singularity of the Passion [of Jesus] is obscured if the same word is used for the Passion and for what takes place in sacrificial rituals" (18).

This last comment, of course, cuts across the vast majority of Christian tradition which sees the death of Jesus precisely as the ultimate religious sacrifice, and the commemoration of that death as a ritual re-enactment and appropriation of that sacrifice. But this distinction is not really the problem here; after

all there is a surface plausibility to the idea that we ought to label these two types of sacrifice differently. With respect to the Joseph story, for example, the brothers' reprehensible act is distinguished by pettiness and self-interest, whereas Judah's later offer is motivated by love. However, Girard has performed a sleight of hand here, since neither of these sacrifices is precisely a religious one. So we are left with his distinction between the Passion and other deadly sacrificial rituals. Yet clearly a distinguishing factor in many of these rituals is precisely that the sacrifice we (and Girard) are viewing as reprehensible is viewed as salutary and beneficial by the members of the society committing the ritual.

Girard has modified his understanding over the years, moving first (in 1993) to an acceptance that mimesis, and therefore mimetically motivated renunciation, can be judged to be good, bad, or somewhere in-between (1993, 63). Then in an interview in 1995, he agrees to call both Judah's and Jesus' acts "'sacrifice' in a special sense" (2000, 280). This all looks well and good, except that Girard has not substantially modified the other component of his view, namely the idea that mythology and ritual sacrifice are on the wane.

Girard's understanding of myth is beyond the scope of this paper. It is enough to point out that for him, "The evolution of mythology is governed by the determination to eliminate any representation of violence" (1986, 76). In other words, myth is the verbal representation and justification of a society's denial of the violence at the root of sacrificial practice. It is important to note in this context that he does not believe that *violence* is lessening; in fact he expects more victims, rather than less (1979, 16-17). The mythological suppression of representations of violence leads not to less violence, but more.

Hence he links the Holocaust to the paradoxical impact of the growing freedom from the control of "ritual, rules, mediating institutions," which while motivated by the incursion of the gospels, yet destroys their ultimate goal (2000, 274-5). Despite Girard's acceptance of denial as being at the heart of sacrifice, and his anything-but-rosy view of current modes of societal violence, I would argue that his uncritical and undefined acceptance of certain categories for religion, ritual, and myth lead him to label our own violence as fundamentally non-sacrificial. In other words, even for Girard, who actively engages both denial and the violence within our culture, sacrifice *per se* is what others do.

Alternatives

So what sort of definition for human religious sacrifice might prove more useful, less prone to the mechanisms of denial? One attempt might be

The instrumental harm or killing of human subjects, by a person or group who (at least in their own minds and usually those of other society members) possess a higher and/or secret knowledge, and are motivated by a controlling narrative, in an attempt to affect or even determine the future.

With respect to the points raised above, this definition has a number of things to recommend it. It contains one essential ingredient of definition: inclusion of many or most of those situations commonly labelled as such. It further seems to encompass a substantial percentage of those phenomena examined by many specialised theorists under the rubric of human sacrifice. It might seem to be stretching the concept of religion, but as mentioned, the attempt to define "religion" so as to exclude our own cultural processes is one of the problems. Hence, this definition doesn't presume a predefined realm of the religious, but instead posits a complex of knowing practitioners, narrative, and efficacy which we tend to label as religious and sacrificial when we encounter it in other societies. Further, the efficacy references the intentionality which appears nearly universal: "If we do *this*, then *that* will (or won't) happen." It also contains the other ingredient, exclusions which help to limit the category. Many individual, societal, and national acts of violence are excluded: hot-headed murder, some acts of war. Most people in my immediate circle of friends, for example, would easily admit that any human killing which occurred under the context and motivation of a Satanic cult, even if held secret from the bulk of the surrounding society, would be murder of a specific kind, namely religious sacrifice.

One aspect missing from my definition is that of public versus private behaviour. While many rituals classed as sacrificial, such as Kiowa sun lodge ceremonies, are held in secret in the sense that their details are reserved for only a few, the *fact* that they are happening would be known. However, the example mentioned above of current satanic ritual is also secret, in the sense that even the fact of any individual enactment would be unknown even to most local residents. These enactments are not-the-less clearly sacrificial as a result.

The definition above admits that the U.S. Government sponsored mind-control experiments in the 1950's, 60's and 70's were just this sort of sacrifice. They inflicted enormous injury, including death, through drugs (LSD, opiates and others), drowning and electroshock (Ross 2000). They were enacted by a narrow elite who possessed, they believed, a secret and higher knowledge and science composed of an emerging body of information around brain-washing, human control and neurological structures and function. They were motivated by a metanarrative which included a "higher good" justification for these acts (linked to Cold War), one which the victims often also believed in. And they intended by these acts, among other things, to quite literally save the world's future from global communism.

Yet the question still remains: how can this analysis have relevance when the article in question is addressing events from five centuries ago. Tzvetan Todorov, in writing about Nazi and Soviet concentration camps in the twentieth century, makes it clear that even in writing about these relatively recent events, "What interested me was not the past *per se*..." (1996, 285). Rather, "My goal is to reach a better understanding of our own moral life, and although I focus on life inside the camps to achieve that goal, this does not mean I believe the two worlds to be identical" (29-30). In other words, Todorov actively eschews the specific form of denial under discussion. This rejection is the point of contact for the "Inca Sacrifice" article. Our interest cannot primarily be in judging the long-dead participants in these acts; it must rather be, as it is for Geertz, in assessing our own time and place, and in establishing modes of thought and critique which can help to guide us in current decision-making. Hence as for Girard, the distance in time, while it makes moral perception and judgment more complex, does not disable moral interaction with the article.

If this were a recent victim, old enough to be mummified—say 30 years in certain climates—but new enough to have family still living, what would we think of this handling of the material? There would be something at least prurient, perhaps even necrophilic about this approach. If this article were about a very recent child-killing, we would call it exploitation. Further, the easy exoticising of these older deaths, the choice to explain away the experience of these children, the failure to make any deeper attempt at understanding, are not excused by a discourse of sensitivity. They are indeed notable for the

ways in which they combine to evade anything which could plausibly implicate the author or his readers in contacts, relationships, structures, and behaviours which could be called similarly sacrificial.

Here, too, Todorov provides not just a rationale, but a model for interaction, when he suggests that “any reflection of mine on the subject of the extreme that did not implicate me personally and draw on my own experiences was likely to be a futile exercise.” Though he himself has never been in a situation like the ones he addresses, nevertheless, his early experience of the “totalitarian state” gave him his “first intimate encounter with political evil, but as something done by me, not to me.... Nothing spectacular, merely the common lot—docile participation in various public demonstrations, acceptance of the code of social behaviour without protest, mute acquiescence to the status quo” (1996, 30).

Todorov embarks on his discussion by launching into the stories of survivors from those camps, in a sense assuming enough common moral ground to begin his description of the camps “from the perspective of moral life” (31), yet in the end, he ends his book with a clear description of the ethical framework which informs his analysis. That honest revelation allows the reader to agree or disagree with Todorov’s conscious presuppositions, and thence to better understand his approach to the stories he tells. As such descriptions always do, it further allows the reader to assess unspoken, and perhaps to Todorov unseen, presuppositions and predispositions as well. Todorov, with his self-implication and ethical self-revelation, provides us with a way forward in assessing a different approach to the “Inca Sacrifice” article, one which accepts its location within popular, rather than academic, discourse, and yet holds the article accountable for its attitudes and impact.

In discussing the willing Aztec victims at Teotihuacan, René Girard certainly does not “count them right”; in fact he exercises a severe judgment upon Aztec practice and cultural relativism alike. He points out that, “Ethnologists eagerly describe the enviable lot of these victims,” even though, “when such attitudes appear in our society, we indignantly deny them...” (1986, 65). He sums up this approach as the belief that, “The terrible sin of ethnocentrism is lying in wait for us and, no matter what exotic societies do, we must guard against the slightest negative judgment,” and promptly rejects it altogether.

However laudable is the desire to “rehabilitate” unappreciated nations, some discernment would be used. The current excesses are as ridiculous as the former arrogant exaggerations, but in reverse. It is the same condescension in the end We either know nothing about the Aztecs and never will; or our sources have value, and honesty demands that we recognize that the Aztec religion has not yet taken its rightful place in our planet’s museum of human horror. (1986, 65)

Girard’s recognition of past arrogance is as laudable as his mention of current condescension. Further, this analysis occurs in the context of an attempt to understand fundamental human sacrifice, and without any sense that sacrifice is confined to “others.” Indeed, Girard has made a life-work of attempting to understand and counteract current violence at every level, not only through his writings, but especially through the Colloquium on Violence and Religion (Williams 2000, 5). In short, he feels entitled, if not compelled, to attempt to understand without being thereby denied the right to ethically judge. Yet his surefootedness in condemning certain practices goes forth assumed, rather than argued, when the concerns of cultural relativism seem worthy of argument, whether in defence or denial of their claims.

Helmut Thielicke (1966), the Lutheran pastor and theologian, does not address ethnography directly. He shares with Girard an active Christian faith and addresses his concerns from within the Christian story, clearly developing his ethics from the Christian scriptures and Lutheran tradition. Yet his experience during World War II makes plain that even in Germany, even among those attempting follow a similar ethic derived from a similar Lutheran covenantal theology, “borderline” situations arise wherein competing claims must be decided. A majority of Lutherans acceded to Hitler’s insistence upon an oath of loyalty and state control over the church. In the face of this majority, and prior to much evidence of Hitler’s awful goals, Thielicke (and Barth and Bonhoeffer) chose instead, with the minority, to resist. Barth fled, Bonhoeffer was arrested and eventually shot, and Thielicke spent the war in a prison camp.

Like Geertz, then, he sees that we must judge, for “to deny decision is to deny the most profound of all the plights of conscience which confronts us, and to regard it as based on mere imaginations” (610). Clearly he does not presume, like Norris, that we will usually be able to judge others to be “right in most things.” But he feels a greater need than Girard to prioritize, clarify, and justify the judgments and decisions we must make. Further, on his reading and because he is predisposed by his prior theology, virtually everyone is implicated and those who aren’t have to some extent been spared not merely by their

character or their prior ethic, but by grace, by providence, by what others might call luck. Hence, despite his own experience in choosing what the vast majority of us would now label as the right side, he recognizes with sympathy “those whose objectivity had been exposed to unheard-of-frictions, not merely in terms of such non-objective emotional elements as anxiety and the instinct of self-preservation, but also in terms of conflicts within the region of actual facts, the confusing complications in the way that problems were posed, and the inability to find any obvious criteria for the decisions which had to be made” (584-5).

In the end, he sees our need to decide in the absence of adequate factual or moral information as a condemnation, something we cannot avoid, yet the perilous nature of this ethical decision-making is made clear by his sense that we can only undertake it because, “What [we] do in this aeon is set under the forgiveness and also the patience of God...” (576). The details of his theology aside, Thieliicke’s approach, like Todorov’s, appeals through its combination of systematic and self-revealing ethical rigour tempered by cautious humility, the acceptance of the reality of ethical judgment and decision-making as a necessity of individual and corporate life, and the recognition that a failure to decide is an abdication which is nonetheless still a decision.

If decisions must be taken then we are in a position of radical responsibility. On Anne Chinnery’s reading of Levinas such responsibility entails at least two absolutes.

Responsibility recognizes that I always, inevitably—and regardless of my intentions—leave traces of suffering. (Chinnery 2003, 11)

If there are no rules to circumscribe my responsibility toward the other, there is no possibility of reassurance that I am ever, in fact, sufficiently moral. One can never be ‘good enough’. (Chinnery 2003, 12)

This could read like a condemnation, that we must decide and our decisions must entail the suffering of the other. However, if read under Thieliicke it can also be a freeing recognition which places all our decisions, the passive and not just the active ones, under not just the same responsibility, but also the same grace.

OTHER WAYS OF PRESENTING THE ARTICLE

36 **Frozen in Time** *Three 500-year-old mummies unearthed on a 22,000-foot peak in the Andes tell an extraordinary story of Inca worship and child sacrifice.*

“Frozen in Time” reads the entry in the table of contents: “Three 500-year-old mummies unearthed on a 22,000-foot peak in the Andes tell an extraordinary story of Inca worship and child sacrifice.” My first thought is, “Wouldn’t THAT be nice?” since this “story” is exactly what has not been told in this article. Neither the children’s story nor that of Inca worship have even been explored with any thoroughness. The only exploration allowed is that by *explore-ers* and that is the story which *has* been told.

What would or could the story we’ve been promised by the table of contents look like? If the goal were to grant all the relevant players equal empathy, I would include a recognition of the complex problems of presenting this material, a genuine focus on the children’s lives and deaths, and a recognition of the complex and complicitous uses surrounding that exploration.

A. *Visual Alternatives*

It might be tempting to urge an actual reversal of intent here, to suggest a deliberate re-staging of the photographs in ways which would emphasize at least the death of these children, if not aspects of trauma. But there are a number of problems. The children do not appear in aspects which suggest that trauma—it would have to be fabricated. Secondly, even if they were to appear in pain, there are various

To what extent should the children’s apparent lack of suffering affect our ethical judgments around their sacrifice?

arguments against showing this. Trauma, verbal or visual resists signification (an issue discussed in Case Study III, below). If the goal of inclusion of a traumatic photograph is to induce somehow an empathy, this goal is often defeated by viewer’s resistance to precisely this—the experience, even vicarious, of trauma.

We can imagine the bodies naked, or displayed in a more clinical fashion, or one that at least allows a recognition of these deaths, these murders. Photographs which *emphasise* the trauma force other issues, however. The photographs of the ice-man of the Alps, “Otzi” (News section 2002, iv), for exam-

ple, offend in another way. The desire behind that article seems to be to exploit the sensationalism of this “murder,” which may also have been a sacrifice.*

That desire leads to a presentation of this corpse which strongly invokes that of the murder victim on the slab

*While this may not be entirely fair, it does raise the question of *National Geographic* pandering to this prurience. The title for this article is, “Who murdered this man?” Clearly in a case where sacrifice of the more certain kind is *not* involved, the magazine actually emphasizes the horror of an individual's death

in a morgue. The angle is deliberately awkward, from the feet up, and the accompanying photographs graphic and close. If anything, this treatment feels worse than the denial-laden photographs in the Reinhard article.

Further, the viewing of traumatic photographs, even when the trauma has been photographed with an intent to reveal, and without the desire to capitalize on sensation, has unintended consequences.

Trauma as captured by photography undergoes a transformation which “distances, sublimates, and pacifies them” (Barthes 1964, 30). No caption can hope to completely overcome this effect. Even more to the point, if our goal is to focus the reader's or viewer's attention upon the underlying causes of this trauma, John Berger points out that “photographs of agony” often have precisely the opposite result, leading away from the ultimate causes of the agony (such as war) and focussing the reader upon “his own moral inadequacy” which may now “shock him as much as the crimes being committed The picture becomes evidence of the general human condition. It accuses nobody and everybody” (1980, 289-90)

In the end, we not only cannot control the article reader's response to the photographs, we should not seek to. The ultimate goal of photographs, layout, and captions, ought to be to *increase* the reader's choice, to anchor the images in their true historical reality, yet enhance their polysemy, to specifically empower the reader to “choose some [meanings] and ignore others,” rather than to ideologically limit and anchor the meanings. If “the most frequent photographic image in [*National Geographic's*] articles on archaeology displays the *unique artefact*, torn from its original production and use context and cleared from its recent archaeological matrix” (Gero and Root 1996, 540 emphasis original), then the inclusion of at least some photographs of the bodies as they were examined, some evidence of the lab freezer, perhaps a photograph of the photographer herself at the site, would all give the reader contextual cues which are evaded in the article as it stands.

Desnoes suggests that, "Faced with photographic pseudo-reality, one can only rely on one's memory and an inconsolable intelligence" (1995, 314). It is in some ways a very limited goal, but the framers of the photographic aspects of this article could at least seek by the means above to enable and assist just that sort of response in the reader and viewer. That space, once opened, could leave room for the body text to engage in the self-implication and ethical to the same ends.

B. Textual Alternatives

A number of textual alternatives present themselves. George Steiner (1989, 1-8) suggests an artificial kingdom, in which all academic or journalistic criticism (including essays like this one) is banned. The only commentary or criticism upon any composition or performance is a new composition or performance. René Girard also suggests the impact of this sort of re-performance, in one of the most intriguing aspects of his theory: "The structure of mythology is repeated in the Gospels, but in such a truthful way that the mythological structure is unmasked" (2000, 282). The idea that a re-mythologizing of sacrifice can help to unmask and ultimately disable its functions has echoes in Barthes' thinking as well. Barthes (1956, 118-120) describes myth as "stolen language" wherein myth arises when first order signs (e.g. $E=mc^2$ as a mathematical formula) are taken over and turned into "form" ($E=mc^2$ as the "pure signifier of mathematicity"). By means of this transposition, "Myth... wrests from the meanings which give it its sustenance an insidious, degraded survival, it provokes in them an artificial reprieve in which it settles comfortably, it turns them into speaking corpses" (120). While Barthes' "meanings" are "the Negro who is saluting, the white and brown chalet, and the seasonal fall in fruit prices" (101), ours are literal corpses, children sacrificed for their society's greater purposes, and these corpses are indeed robbed, sacrificed again in the course of being used for this article.

However, as Barthes points out, "It is extremely difficult to vanquish myth from the inside: for the very effort one makes in order to escape its strangle hold becomes in its turn the prey of myth: myth can always, as a last resort signify the resistance which is brought to bear against it. Truth to tell, the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an artificial myth; and this reconstituted myth will in fact be a mythology. Since myth robs something, why not rob myth" (123)? All of

Barthes' examples of re-mythification come from literature. To rob the myths of propaganda, advertising, politics, he does not suggest propaganda, advertising, politics, but fiction.

Rather than a new article, then, or another ethnography, perhaps I would attempt a performed monologue. In place of captions, I would give the girl on page 37 a voice. I would satirize the moment of the image: "Look at me! On this page, I am not a frozen corpse; I am a movie star, sleeping peacefully. I am, even Johan has said, quite beautiful. I may have lost the rest of my life: marrying, loving, having children, but I have gained immortality. I get to stay in a freezer forever and have my tissues sampled for DNA and my blood searched for ancient viruses. But they take beautiful pictures of me; even my skin looks like gold."

This approach points toward other textual possibilities. If we look at the specific shape of the denial in this article, remembering its internal inconsistencies, some alternatives arise. An absolute acceptance of difference, something close to Geertz or Norris, at least has the benefits of consistency, though it is still a form of denial: denial of the fact that we must judge, denial that a choice not to judge is still a judgment. As we have seen, the focus on difference in the ethnographic sections of this article, however, entails denial of another sort, motivating our collusion through a highly selective use of multiple discourses, personal, pseudoscientific, and ethnographic, and within the latter, particular intermittent emphases upon both similarity and difference. It is precisely the structure of these discourses, the sliding from one to another, which encodes the denial.

Alternatives present themselves even within other popular science magazines. *Scientific American*, for example, simply adopts a scientific tone which varies little between articles about shark hunting habits, string theory, and archaeology (see for example Hall 1999). Bones are simply bones with information to yield, as are bodies of any kind. While this scientism can be repugnant in its apolitical aspect, it at least declares its position, like *Granma*, frankly, and thus allows for a greater freedom in the reader's interaction. I would far prefer such an approach to the National Geographic article's selective invocation of empathy as justification.

Even closer to home is a *Discover* article about a Moche sacrifice site (Pringle 1999). While similar in overall tone to the *National Geographic* article, the *Discover* article includes a number of points at which horror is expressed or at least allowed:

Few things so unnerved the Spanish conquerors of the New World as the prospect of death on the sacrificial stone [They] watched in horrified silence as Aztec priests on the opposite lakeshore struggled up the stairs of a temple with 66 Spanish captives. Stretching them one at a time across a narrow stone, the priests carved out their beating hearts, then swiftly butchered their bodies (36)

Through these Spanish conqueror's eyes (ironically enough) we are allowed access to, rather than steered away from, a horrified response to a sacrifice. A greater effort is made to make the sacrificial practices understandable, and much less emphasis is laid on the explorer and his amazing quest. This article engages more styles of discourse and explanation than would be found in *Scientific American*, but interestingly, usually adopts one theme and one approach for long periods. This consistency is in marked contrast to the *National Geographic* article, which frequently shifts from sentence to sentence within the same paragraph, and as already noted, even within some sentences. Again, the overall impact is to make more space for the reader's engagement.

Perhaps there is another alternative, even within ethnography:

A post-modern ethnography is... in a word, poetry—not in its textual form, but in its return to the original context and function of poetry, which by means of its performative break with everyday speech evoked memories of the ethos of the community and thereby provoked hearers to act ethically.... [It] defamiliarizes commonsense reality in a bracketed context of performance, evokes a fantasy whole abducted from fragments Post modern ethnography is not a new departure, not another rupture in the form of discourse of the sort we have come to expect as the norm of modernist aesthetics'' scientific emphasis on experimental novelty, but a self-conscious return to an earlier and more powerful notion of the ethical character of all discourse, as captured in the ancient significance of the family of the terms "ethos", "ethnos," "ethics." (Tyler 1986, 125-26)

In responding to an early version of this Case Study with poetry, George McWhirter has produced a specific poem that incorporates an old story, and rewrites child sacrifice into today, into suicide bombers and Halloween.

This sort of ethnography—like Steiner's re-performance or Barthes' re-mythifying fictions—accepts the performative and poetic aspect and offers the greatest hope of enacting a form of counter-denial. In place of the body text, I would embody Barthes' recognition that one image or one idea can have many signifiers. I could take the myth of sacrifice and attempt to flesh out with real understanding

the link between necessity and expediency, the drive to end this child's life to propitiate a God, to achieve needed ends. I could incorporate her own possible, even probable assent. The priest's reactions could include sympathy, subsumed under their greater understanding of the vital need for these acts. Any such re-mythification would be fraught with ethical decision-making, with judgments and choices about the Inca, about myself, but I have already claimed these choices as not only necessary, but unavoidable.

In other words, as opposed to the easy option of simply assuming others to be "mostly right," or for that matter, mostly wrong, I would assume rather that their actions may be intelligible—at least partially understandable. But that understanding can only come at the price of a complex of choices, including that of empathy. And that empathy must depend upon at least some potential similarities between us and those we seek to understand.

It would then be tempting to turn this analysis upon those who fly airplanes into towers, but I would rather seek to label certain practices, not currently considered such, as sacrificial, and thereby make them un-natural, exposed as instrumental violence, or as undertaken in fear, or as expediencies motivated by the need for control. I would, in short, lay the mythic form of this act like a template over the forms of my own life, over my communities: churches and cities and schools, over U.S. and Canadian governments which would drug adults or electroshock children to save the world.

This would be my enacted re-mythification, a minor attempt to rob both the ancient and the present myths of their power. Paradoxical as it may seem, such a re-mythification might act to de-mystify and de-naturalize the body of the sacrificed child who is for now only an amber-hued artefact on page 55.

CASE STUDY III: PERFORMATIVE INQUIRY

Cheated of Bruises

I lead my friend's cool fingers
to my wordless upper arms.
"They ache when I do nothing,
and when I lift my hands
to type, the muscles cramp,
but the skin—look—is mute."

I try to find a word
but the young constable's "assault"
feels like faking it
when my own surfaces refuse
to witness and I still can't find
the proper term
for something corded and hard
as long as his thumbs and
about as wide but too deep
beneath the skin.

Without a word
I want my arms
with precision to state
that he grabbed me, hard,
I want them livid
at being pinned to my sides
for dark personal rage
in that stranger's eyes
please give me indigo
for the unwanted necessary
instant image of breaking
his nose with my head
his balls with my knee
a brown and yellow stain
of blood pooled
just under the skin
because I was too shocked to scream.
He has left instead
his own two thumbs
snugged right up against the bones
beneath this silent skin.

Performative Inquiry: Aliens and 'Etssem

An Attempted Drama

In the autumn of 2003, I was a student in a graduate level class, *Performative Inquiry: Dancing on the Edge of Chaos*, taught by Lynn Fels in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. I had enrolled in the class under the suspicion that the embodiment which occurs in dramatic re-enactment might well provide a powerful empathic

interface with social and individual trauma. In

Performative Inquiry is a newly conceptualized and articulated methodology which employs the modes of performing arts such as drama as a means of inquiry. (Fels 1998, 1999)

particular, I wanted to explore the practice of adopting a role and the relationship of this adopting to the more deliberate “in another’s shoes” aspect of empathy.

Even this brief description, however, stops me, pointing as it does to a challenge posed by language. While the inherent concept of embodiment is one of unity, in English this can only be approached negatively or by merger—by saying “*non*-dualistic” or by talking about “em-bodiment” as if we and all our doings were not necessarily and inherently bodily. As mentioned in Case Study I, even those states experienced as disembodied are in my view thoroughly embodied. Writers approach this dilemma in different ways. In an article about dance full of wonderful performative language, Monique Giard can manage no better than “body-mind” (2000, 74 ff.), or in a poem at the end, “bodysoul. (2000, 83)” In an article on “Academic Performance,” Lynn Fels and Lee Stothers explore the problems with phrases such as “embodied mind,” which reduce the body to adjectival status, and then point to a larger set of questions which challenge “the dualism of Descartes’ mind-body”:

The question is: Where is this knowledge located—in the mind or in the body? Is balancing a bicycle knowledge that the mind acquires (how?) and then transmits to the body or is it *vice versa*? Who is in charge of riding the bicycle—the mind, the body or both? And if so, how is that knowledge shared. (Fels and Stothers 1996, 246)

When I am reading the science of mind to do with trauma, writers often pose the question from the other end: Is it a *who* or a *what* that has been traumatized, and where does that trauma reside, in the body—including the brain—or the mind?

One alternative arises when “Japanese philosopher Yuasa Yasuo talks of one of the states of Noh performance” as “a state of bodymind oneness where the movement of mind and body become indistinguishable ” Fels and Stothers point out that the translation of a Japanese term, “... *shinshin*, as bodymind, with ‘body’ preceding ‘mind’ [avoids] the dualism implied in the hyphenated ‘mind-body’ in which the mind is prioritized over the ‘body’” (Fels and Stothers 1996, 248). In her later thesis, Fels further clarifies that the second character really encompasses “mind-heart” (Fels 1999), yet even this clarification points to the fundamental incapacities of English when it attempts to articulate the fundamental unity.

My own thinking turns to Hebrew, to the different ways its words divide across and create semantic reality. One word in particular, **עֵצֶם**, *’étsem*, seems helpful. Its most literal meaning is *bone*, but its wider and more metaphorical meanings include concepts close to our *body*, *substance*, and *essence*. In English we can mention the heart of the matter; in Hebrew we discuss the bone of heaven—its core or essence, the very thing itself. I am not claiming for the ancient Hebrew *’étsem* the precise range of meanings I will use it for here, but like *shinshin*, the unfamiliarity of *’étsem* to English ears, and even its graphical strangeness on the page, allows me to use it in apposition or even opposition to the conceptual split whereby “psychological” trauma can somehow happen to my mind or my psyche, but “physical” trauma happens to my body or brain. This then is the word, *’étsem*: brain, body, substance, essence, bone.

I approached Lynn at the end of the first class session and discussed the possibility of using a part of one class to pursue a drama related in some way to my work. I thought I could build a participatory drama based on structured deliberate trauma inflicted on children. I had copies of a number of documents and testimonies related to my own experience but was at a loss as to how to use them. However, as the course proceeded, my view of the power of this form of embodiment was strongly supported through the course readings, and through various structured dramatic experiences led by Lynn and others during the early weeks of class. These included especially a class period which was led by Jacyntha England, a Master of Arts student in the Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction (CSCI) unit and the Uni-

versity of British Columbia. My reactions and those of the class confirmed in me the power of this mode for engaging with stories containing serious and hurtful material.

Jacyntha opened the drama by reading a short description of an incident from the 1920's in Vancouver, during which a Chinese boy, the only Asian in his class, was turned away from a swim meet because no Asians were allowed at the Vancouver Aquatic Center. His classmates all chose not to compete in response. During one phase of the class I drew a sign which said, "No Asians," and then adopted the role of the employee sitting at the door of the aquatic center. I imagined myself sitting at a sort of kiosk, checking people's passes or tickets or taking some kind of fee for entry. At the conscious level I expected that such a person would feel angry, and also that they would act out of a conscious antagonism to the boy. Unexpectedly, at just this point, Jacyntha asked first, "What are you afraid of?" and then, "What do you want?" giving us only a moment to inwardly respond and immediately write down the answer each time. My answers were, "I'm afraid of losing my job," and "I just wish he would go away, that the whole thing would go away."

I don't know whether this is what any given swimming pool employee felt at the time, though it seems quite possible. What I do know is that my answers startled me very much, and caused me to consider how I would in fact respond were I placed in that particular situation.

Julie Salverson describes a "crucial discovery" made by Augusto Boal in his development of the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO): "The spectator who steps on stage is no longer an observer but enters a particular subjecthood which Boal calls spect-actorship The actor became an implicated listener, a witness, an "I" willing to be available to the call" (2006, 154). In allowing myself to become a spect-actor I became a subject in a social drama and so confronted a distinct cowardice in myself which was unexpected.

Class readings ((Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991; Maturana 1987; Garoian 1999) and experiences led me, through multiple conversations with Lynn, and one with Jacyntha, to structure a class which would be a hybrid between more standard role drama and Boal's Image Theatre (Boal 1979). I intended to use published testimonies about various forms of highly structured abuse, and to initiate the drama by

having one of the survivors, now an adult, read a "statement" about the ongoing impact of those events in his or her life. A meeting would then have proceeded during which various participants, representing original cult members, the parents of the victim, and others, would decide what to do about the fact that this survivor was beginning to go public. Jacyntha suggested ending the drama by handing out questions: (1) *Write about a time when your trust in a system was broken.* (2) *Think about a time when you were trying to tell the truth and no-one listened to you.*

The time invested in this project grew by the week, as I met with Lynn, read about role-play and image theatre, met with Jacyntha, and began graphing and detailing the roles and the timing for the various aspects of the class. My own goals became clearer as well. *What did I want?* I liked the way, for Boal, "all theatre is necessarily political" (Boal 1979, ix), the way this style of theatre foregrounded action (1979, ix). I wanted to expose the class to the written materials, and to this situation. I wanted to observe their reactions within role, especially as they engaged with the questions around complicity, around victims and perpetrators. If the participants fully engaged in the drama, I expected that someone would suggest the covert murder of the subject. Jacyntha also thought this likely. In the written responses and in the debrief I wanted to explore the participants' own processes around specifically belief and denial: what they had thought about the information as they first read and heard it and where they wound up at the end of the class.

What was I afraid of?

I was particularly concerned about traumatizing the class, so much so that there are multiple references to this question in my notes from my meetings with Lynn: "What about pushing people past their boundaries?" "How not to traumatize people?" I felt the desire not to inflict damage, or even temporary pain, but a second question, alluded to above, concerned what level of information might so impact the recipients that they would "turn off" in response. Hence I was unclear how many details to include about the actual techniques used in the original experiences, which had included every imaginable form of abuse (humiliation, deception, cold, sleep deprivation, drugs of all kinds, electroshock, starvation, thirst, drowning, extreme pain, etc.). I discussed these concerns with Lynn and with Jacyntha, but even two weeks

prior to the date for the drama, had not yet come to any real conclusions. A part of what I wanted to know revolved around precisely what the response would be to this sort of information, but my inexperience in performing these sorts of dramas and my concern that someone might genuinely be hurt inclined me to restrict the information to relatively abstract phrasing such as that above (“humiliation,” “pain”). Taking this approach is prudent in any situation where graphic details might “trigger” other survivors of trauma who are not yet at a point to cope with such details. But I also worried about triggering an aversive reaction to the information itself among even the non-traumatized members of the class.

Role Drama Trauma

Before I could resolve these issues, however, they became moot. I met with Lynn Fels two weeks before the intended drama date, and we finalized the details for how to structure the entry points for each section of the “drama”.

A significant part of cult programming involves the use of a combination of very sophisticated and very blunt means to prevent participants from talking about what has happened, so I had experience with the phenomenon of programmed punishment. To give just one example, every time I have attempted to speak or write about what happened to me, I have felt, despite years of therapy, like I was being throttled. The impression is exceptionally vivid. Sometimes I can feel the various pressures of a thumb and fingers—the thumb just beside my voice box. Sometimes I can feel the rope, which is a little higher, and scratchy—the sensation I am having right now (and have continued to have through all the various edits of this paper). But I know that there is no hand, no rope, that there is no actual pressure of any kind, except within my brain. Should you wish to simulate this experience, proceed as follows: throttle yourself quite hard for perhaps ten seconds, or until you start feeling panicky, then release your hands. The sensation which occurs for a moment just after you release, in which you still have somatic memory of the event, but you know cognitively that your hands are no longer there, is quite close to that which occurs with throttling programmed to stop speech.*

*If you have just undertaken this experiment you have performed a very direct act of chosen physical empathy.

Similarly, in a pattern I've been told is common for survivors of many kinds of trauma, I experienced severe and frequent seizure-like jolts after I'd been in therapy for a few weeks, when I began to describe the odd fragmented memories I carried with me—sometimes as many as 30 or 40 jolts during any one hour session. I had no idea what was happening. Because I was with an extremely careful therapist, I didn't even know of the existence of dissociated somatic memory, and, bless her, she didn't tell me. She merely asked what they felt like. I responded, "Like grabbing an electric cattle fence."

Months into the process, as I sat in the pew at church listening to an appallingly boring and badly constructed sermon, I suddenly had a detailed image of red and blue alligator clamps attached to the fingers on either hand. I didn't experience the shock at that time, and in this early phase of counselling didn't even really know that such fractured memories were possible, so I didn't immediately link the two. I thought I was having my usual very vivid imaginative visual reaction to a stimulus—this time the mild torture of this sermon. It is worth noting that the failure of linkage between the somatic memory and the other memories was so extreme that the shocks failed in their goal. I really was like Pavlov's dog, conditioned so that the triggers worked to elicit the physiological response; I was shocked when I talked. But whether due to a glitch in the original programming, or to the twenty intervening years, I simply didn't get it that I was being punished; since I felt no inclination to stop talking other than the physical discomfort itself. I would pause for a split second, and then continue telling the story of what had happened to me with greater comfort.

As the somatic memory became contextualized, as I recalled the bits of visual and auditory memory which made it clear that, as with many cult survivors, electroshock had been extensively used especially to prevent me from talking, the actual current somatic events began to subside. To put it another way, as I began to experience the memories in a form more like non-dissociated but highly distressing memories, two things happened: the isolated somatic memories eventually became very rare, and, importantly, I began to be able to describe what had happened to me.

However, all of these stimuli, especially the throttling, became increasingly frequent as I proceeded to develop the drama. At first I figured I could live with it, even for eight or ten weeks, though the punishment intensified each time I talked to Lynn and then to Jacyntha. But the level and varieties of punishment escalated and I began to suspect that even if I could emotionally cope with two more weeks of throttling, intermittent shock, and very little sleep, I couldn't subject my body to this more extreme punishment, the intensity of which I had not experienced before.

In any case, I finally spoke to several friends. Introducing the topic proved rather delicate for me, since I had to this point quite carefully avoided telling *any* of them what I was doing, having already a suspicion of their likely responses:

Friend one: "How could you *think* you could do this? Man! You are in complete denial!"

Friend two: "What are you? Nuts??!"

Friend three: "You're crazy. You are *trying* to do your Ph.D. And you just survived Halloween." (*Nota bene*: Halloween is a bad time of year for cult survivors.)

So here were the people who have believed in my experience, and have loved me through my recovery, telling me that I shouldn't bring this information into a more public forum. They understood how distressing the attempt was in its repercussions for my body, but I couldn't seem to communicate how appallingly frustrating it was to be unable to present the material, *because* I was being stopped from within, not by some inherent sense of social intelligence, but by torture inflicted on me decades ago. Further, I knew I could make the torture go away—by not talking.

So what was I afraid of?

Not the pain, primarily. I was afraid of being silenced, but even more afraid of the overall price my system, my *'étsem*, was paying for my determination to reveal this information, and for what the long-term implications might be for my health.

What did I want? Most proximally to somehow salvage a workable drama for a class that was only one week away. In the long term, of course, to find some way to overcome the silences.

An Actual Role Drama

Given the fact that I am a Ph.D. student and that this drama and a resultant paper were intended as the basis for one of my comprehensive papers, this choice felt not just like a personal frustration, but like an academic and practical disaster. I was determined not to completely cancel. Given the work entailed in producing a drama of this sort, I didn't have time to do much new reading; I needed to use material about which I already knew something. In the end, I met with Lynn one week prior to the intended date for the drama, and before her eyes, scratched over the sketch I had made for the first drama (Appendix A, 49), and began to outline the possibilities for a new one based on a particular model for trauma, one which would use material from this area I was familiar with, but which would allow my system to stop punishing me for my intention to reveal forbidden information. I quite liked the grim little symmetry inherent in accessing the theoretical material I had originally read in an attempt to understand precisely the sort of ongoing punishments which were now preventing the first drama.

So on November 20, 2003, I directed a role drama based on a particular model for the processing of significant traumatic events, with the students and Lynn as the participants. The drama was based on a common model for trauma. Briefly, this model runs as follows: In normal un-traumatized states, sensual experience enters the brain and is sent through the thalamus to various parts of the brain for processing, such as the visual cortex and auditory cortex. Other pathways collect information such as long-term memories related to the stimulus and all of this information is then relayed to the amygdala, which is responsible for emotion, and for deciding how important information is. The amygdala, for example can initiate a fight or flight response to an emergency via the hypothalamus. However, this process is really quite slow. There is a second "emergency" pathway which goes directly from the thalamus to the amygdala and then the hypothalamus. When all goes well, an organ called the hippocampus does the work to organize these components and to process them into long-term memory in such a way that the memory can be accessed coherently and can also be related verbally in an intelligible way.

The amygdala plays a critical role in determining which memories are encoded in this way, by signalling the hippocampus to become more aroused. However, during extreme or prolonged trauma this

system breaks down. In particular, the amygdala, as it becomes aroused, overwhelms the hippocampus, with the result that the various sensory inputs occur, and indeed are properly stored, but the traces through the hippocampus necessary for coherent recall and communication of the event are lost. This sequential heightening of arousal and then shutting-down of the hippocampus can lead to very acute “flashbulb” memories, or even to memories which not only can’t be forgotten, but which replay endlessly with something like the force of the initial event. With even greater or more prolonged stress (though this can occur very quickly with truly extreme trauma), all conscious memory of the event may be lost, and fragmentary sense memories—somatic or olfactory for example—may later arise to be re-experienced without context. Because they lack context and include direct sensory experience, as if they are currently happening, these memories often feel like hallucinations. Both those who are remembering, and those in whom they confide may believe that a psychotic event is happening, even in the absence of other evidence of psychosis. Conditioned responses may occur, as with the war vet who drops to the ground at a car backfire. The tone of some of my reading suggests disagreement in the recent past about some of the details above. Eichbaum defends the “substantial emerging evidence” of a separate system for emotional memory (2002, 269). Nonetheless, this rough and highly over-simplified model, drawn from readings in a number of books, appears to be quite standard (Kalat 1998, 279-302; Squire and Kandel 1999, 157-173; Joseph 1996, 234-244; Beaumont, Kenealy, and Rogers 1999, 69, 395; Carter 1998, 94-97).

During the week before the class, I searched for some simple schematic which might be helpful in summarizing this information for the class, but everything I could find was either too complex or too vague. This difficulty typified an ongoing negotiation with questions of complexity and scale and continued to arise in various forms, including which literature to read, which level of detail to model the drama on, and which sorts of language to use in the eventual paper.

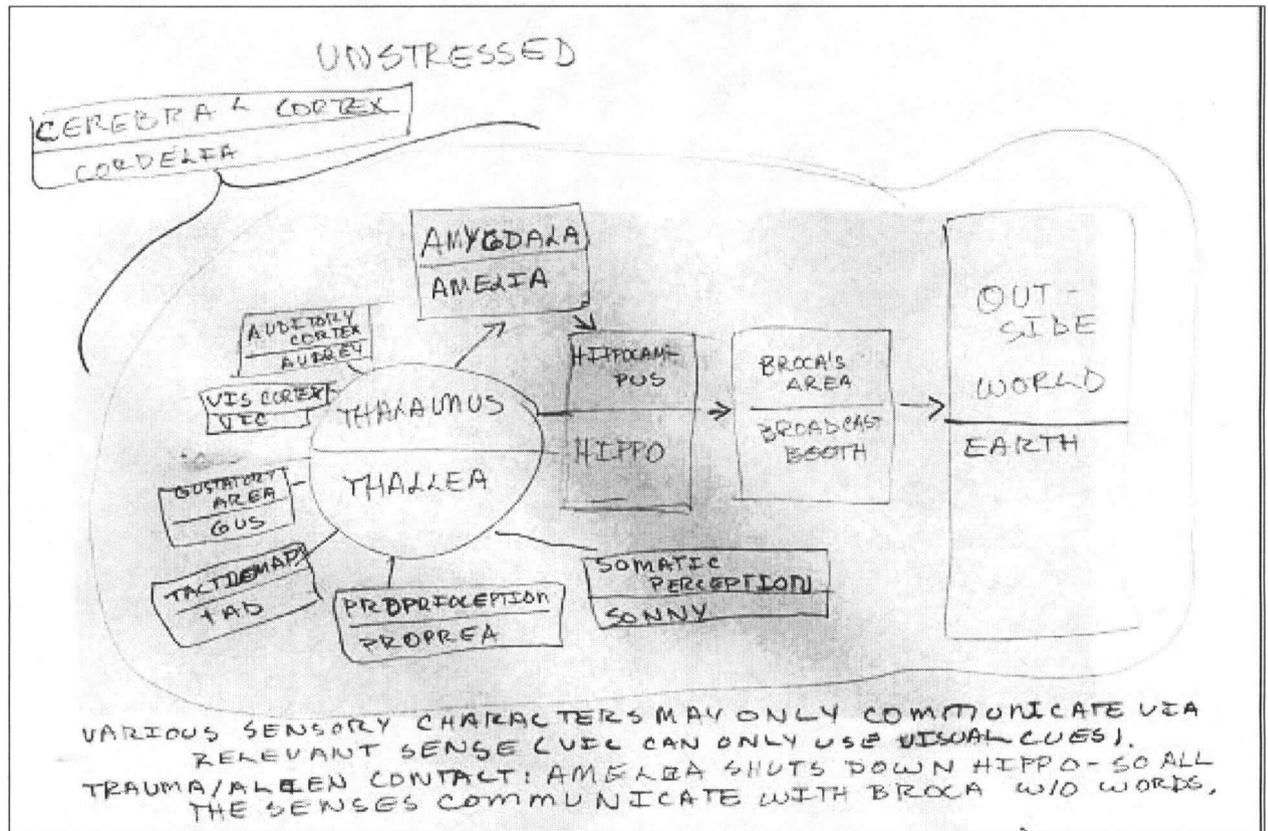
Finally I phoned my own therapist, a woman who specialises in treating the victims of very severe trauma. She recommended an article in *Traumatic Stress* (van der Kolk 1996, 279-302), where I did in fact find a very useful image at more-or-less the scale I wanted.

The accompanying article also included a reference (van der Kolk 1996, 293) to a study implicating a very specific part of the brain, Broca's area, in the "speechless terror" which accompanies trauma, and in the later difficulties in formulating and relating what has happened. The article also pointed to another article within the same book with a fuller description of this phenomenon (van der Kolk 1996). I had intended to focus on the memory component of trauma response, but the implications of speechlessness proved irresistible, given my interest in denial, since they externalized the theme of communication within the brain. I decided to incorporate this new information into the drama.

My choices in structuring the drama had several motivators. We had read several articles about the use of role drama in teaching science and math. One approach was student-generated analogy. Indeed, a graduate student led us through precisely this approach during class, one week prior to the drama. We examined a model for the water cycle, and then evolved our own dramatic representation. One group became a tour group going on vacation; another became a "Greek Water Chorus." The process was fun, challenging, delightful, and memory-building—I won't soon forget the details of the molecular bonds required for vapour, water, and ice.

During her presentation, this student mentioned research showing that student-generated analogies tended to work better than other-generated analogies as teaching tools for scientific information. Given that we had tried student-generated analogies, I thought it might be more enlightening for us all to try other-generated analogy which meant structuring a role drama based upon a particular model, and then turning the students loose to enact the functional definitions within this model. I was not sure how to develop the drama. Lynn suggested making the class into explorers on Mars, with an alien contact as the traumatic stressor. I proceeded to develop the characters and their roles based on discreet brain functions. The functions were necessarily highly simplified. The prefrontal cerebral cortex, for example, is not even a specific organ or functional unit of the brain. It is, rather, a sort of geographical location wherein many "command and control" functions take place. Nonetheless, it was easiest to make that area into a single character, the base commander, and to let that commander be me. As such, I had a detailed script. For

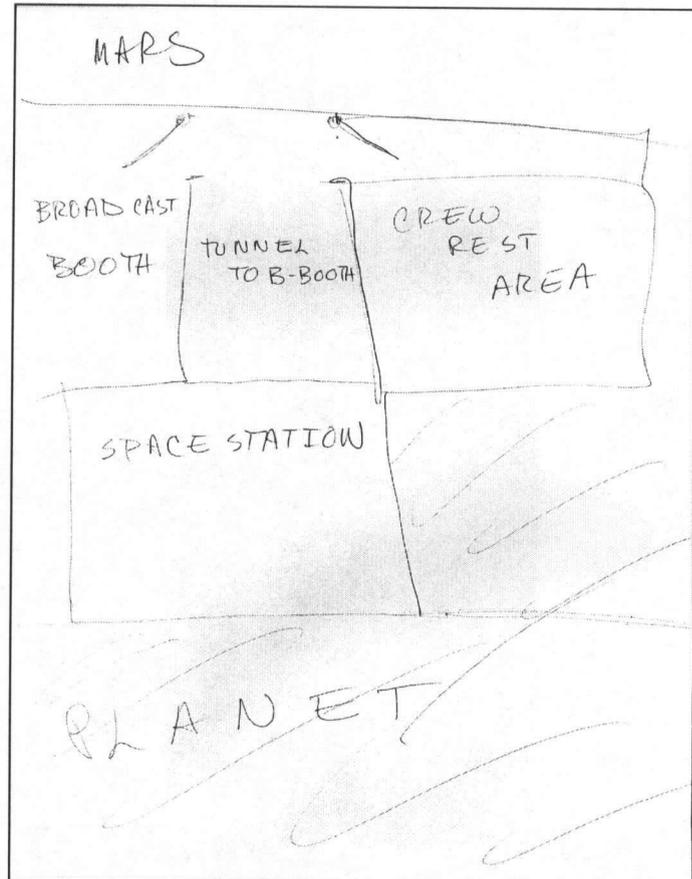
every other character, I developed a set of protocols which mirrored non-traumatic and traumatic functions for their “organ” within this model for the processing of trauma (Appendix B).



See Appendix III for details

The final instructions, then, were highly simplified through a number of steps. Even the more advanced original materials I read, which were often on a textbook model, were already narratives constructed from primary research materials. I then evolved my own much more simplified version of a specific subset of those materials. Finally, and prior to constructing the characters, the model was influenced by the late addition of the schematic image and the much simpler version of trauma presented by van der Kolk's article. The final structure involved a simulation of traumatic conditions, a simulation of non-traumatic conditions, and a post-drama debriefing. The entire crew became the brain, and the alien was to make contact as a traumatic stressor. The alien herself was not aggressive, but she possessed a very loud air-horn, which went off the moment she was touched, catapulting the entire crew into emergency mode.

The drama took place in three different rooms which represented the space station, the planet outside, and a communication room from which the communications officer could hear only vaguely what else was going on. This last room represented Broca's area.



What was I afraid of?

My worries prior to the drama were many. My content-oriented worries had primarily two aspects, the excessive simplification of the model, and despite this, the extreme complexity which nonetheless remained in the instructions to the crew. This mismatch had me feeling that I might put the class through a disastrous mess of a role drama and not teach them anything useful about trauma. I also had more-personal anxieties about how well the drama would go, whether the participants would enjoy it, and my own in-role performance, given the open nature of the critical events. I also had contradictory concerns that, on the one hand, Lynn would be frustrated, since she clearly prefers the more open-ended sorts of

processes, the “play,” and on the other that the drama would be so open-ended that no connection to the scientific model would be discerned by the students.

What did I want?

My goals were multiple: I hoped that something of the trauma model would register for the participants and that perhaps this would lead to some better understanding and empathy toward themselves and others. However, my primary attitude was one of openness. I wanted to see what would happen if I structured a drama on a model of brain trauma, and I was intrigued by the overlaying of this human activity upon a structured system derived from a particular discipline’s way of viewing a type of human experience, at the idea of the bodies with brains executing as pieces of brains, to simulate as a community a whole brain within a body, especially with the participants not knowing in their *’étsem* anything of what I had used to structure the entire exercise.

In the end, this role drama went well, though periods of unplanned and unanticipated confusion and even chaos arose during the simulations. This chaos, a result of the break-down in usual response systems, in fact fit the trauma model, since the system failed under stress in a way which was recognizably alike to what happens with severe trauma. For example, the broadcaster, representing Broca’s area, sent out this message to earth at the end of the second simulation. “Hold on,” she said. “Something’s happened. I don’t understand, but it seems there’s been some... touching, yes touching, and some noise, and some vision of something—an EMERGENCY!”

In other words, at the end of a complex series of reactions, many or most of which I hadn’t anticipated, the broadcaster’s message was astonishingly like those which emerge for a seriously traumatized individual as they try to remember and then communicate their trauma. She had pieces of sense data, and only fragmentary words, and a profound sense that something was terribly wrong. Given the anxieties before and during the drama to this point, I couldn’t have been more delighted, nor more shocked, despite my role in structuring the system.

Nonetheless, the crew were evidencing some real distress at the chaotic interactions, so I initiated an unplanned in-role de-briefing followed this broadcast. I confessed that I was a first time commander

and apologized for my inexperience. Then I asked for suggestions for restructuring the roles of the crew to improve communication.

A great many ideas were suggested. The various data collection officers, who were representing the senses, knew that they should get together and communicate, and that the information collection officer (hippocampus) simply “had to function,” as the very frustrated visual data officer put it. To this end, suggestions were made to diminish the role of the “data importance officer,” still without the awareness that she stood for the amygdala. As I listened, I was remembering that, under the current scientific model, the amygdala acts to disrupt or suppress the hippocampus during trauma, thereby acting in an essential way to initiate the chain of confusion. When I suggested that we didn’t want to lose her risk assessment expertise altogether, several people spoke at once, to the effect that, “Fine, we can consult with her, and she can tell us about danger, but she just can’t shut down Hippo.” In making these changes, the crew essentially restored the forms of communication between them, such that they now corresponded to the (admittedly simplified) model of a non-traumatized, fully functional brain.

We re-ran the drama with these corrections. With the changes which had been made, the model reasserted itself in the form of corrections to the system of human communication. The alien was not

*Of course, that the model reasserts itself does not guarantee anything about its correspondence to what is happening at the brain level in traumatic experience.

frightened off this time, and the crew therefore found the life-sustaining supplies only available

through appropriate contact with this highly confusing and extremely noisy life-form.*

I ended the second role drama, and the crew shared the alien food and drink, which indeed proved to be potable, and remarkably similar to amaretti di Saronno and a rather fine single malt scotch, incidentally one of my favourite combinations, and some juice. Meanwhile, I handed out the schematic, and then explained the genesis of the drama. I discussed the ways the drama hadn’t worked according to plan, with the excessive complexity of the roles, in my opinion, leading to even greater disturbance than I had anticipated. The class members were quite excited to see the underlying schema. After several questions, one participant said, “Why, this is what you should do with trauma victims! It would help them so much to understand.” It was precisely what I had hoped for, but I was still stunned.

Problems with this Account

I have several qualms about the preceding account as written. There is the genre, for one thing, which is a very direct almost naive form of narrative *reportage*, albeit with what Barone and Eisner would see as a traditional quantitative bent (1997, 78). The “here was the experiment, here are the results” tone in this way seems to suit the semi-scientific nature of the drama as pursued. This approach, however, does not invite questions in the way that e.g. a more multi-vocal genre might, one where, “The reader is encouraged to participate in a variety of perspectives and not to arrive at a single, correct version of reality” (Barone and Eisner 1997). Further, the through-line I have chosen centres on the stated science- and pedagogy-oriented goals of the drama, assessing the success and failure of the attempt with reference to these goals, and only hinting there are other entire worlds of interest which have been excluded. The narrative as I’ve told it does not even invite the recognition that I was only one participant, one point of view, nor that however privileged or even God-like my role was, I couldn’t be in three rooms at once. However, any choice of voice or genre entails gains and losses. A narrative focused upon the social interactions which occurred, which were very intense and utterly fascinating, could easily be added to the one above. With something like 3000 added words, we’d still only have touched the surface of the various ways of telling the stories of this drama.

It is in the nature of performative inquiry that not only the drama itself, but its interpretations, can lead into a multitude of exploratory paths.

Most notably, however, this telling neglects many ways in which the drama succeeded outside its mandate in pointing to intersections between trauma and empathy. For example, to improve communication with earth, the camera was moved during the final in-role debrief from the isolated media booth, into the main base area. However, after a particularly fractious interchange, the crew were shocked and worried when I reminded them that the fight had just been broadcast by the now omniscient camera. One participant responded, “Goddamnit! It’s all over the bloody internet! Anybody who wants to see it can!” We had lost control of how we would be seen, and any influence over how our behaviours would be interpreted by the viewers on earth. This reaction reflected my similar drives to control through the drama as I originally planned it how the participants might view the victims of trauma, and therefore *me*. It fur-

ther points toward the unanticipated consequences of communication: The viewers would not have seen the original traumatic encounters, only the later confrontation. Trauma survivors, too, who attempt to communicate with all those who were not available to see the original trauma, struggle with unanticipated consequences: at best of course, they are believed, but they are often disbelieved and labelled as, for example, psychotic. The fragmented and partial nature of their testimony, in absence of the original context, helps contribute to this outcome.

There was a very empathic discourse during the performative explorations and in the in-role debrief involving the discovery of the alien. Indeed, one crew member insisted that "alien" was a totally inappropriate term, since we were on their planet. Another offered "host" and the entire crew worked hard to use "host" thereafter, correcting ourselves and each other at the "alien" designation. I was very struck by this change, especially since Lynn and I had used "alien" throughout structuring the drama, without a qualm. This shift in attitude was immense, an attempt not only to understand this being before us, to grasp its behaviour in terms we could understand, but to enter into a quite different way of viewing its reality, of in fact trying as best we could to make their reality our own. Carl Rogers' dictum ("Carl Rogers" above) about entering and becoming at home in the world of the other strike home here.

Lynn pointed out a further more personal application: In adopting the dual role of facilitator and commander/cerebral cortex, I was treating the drama as if I were outside the traumatic situation, and treating the alien as a trauma outside the brain. Equally, or perhaps more so, I AM the trauma/alien to the brain of society. I often feel like an alien, but if what I am saying is true, then I am *not* the alien in this world, it is a world to which the others need to adapt if they are to understand at least this part of human reality in our own culture. Lynn said, "Your (my) life challenges the story I live in, a story of good governments and good communities and fundamentally benign parents. The alien on the performative planet, but also you, represent a risk and an opportunity." Understanding and subsequent adaptation may have life-threatening or life-saving implications if not for those who behold my, to them alien, self then for others around them.

My own role in the drama also provides fuel for thought—I thought I would actually be in control, but simulating being out of control, during the crisis phase. Instead, I was significantly out of control during segments of the chaos, and only somewhat more in control during the second phase. My ineffectuality, then, was un-simulated and had a quite different impact on my actions, and especially, I think, on the unplanned in-role debriefing.

While I was not just facilitating, but also in a role within the drama, my choice was to adopt the “mantle of the expert” (Heathcote and Bolton 1995) at several levels: as the framer of the drama, within the drama as the head of the station, in the pre- and post-drama briefing and de-briefing. Within the drama, this choice limited my ability to simply participate in a hands-off fashion—I couldn’t in fact fully release into the play, or to put it another way, I couldn’t release my self to express fully, bodily, what I was experiencing. In the debriefing, my focus on trauma as a model meant that we discussed other outcomes of the drama—personal, political, relational—very little. The necessary shifting from in-role character to facilitator is a common experience for facilitators. Nonetheless, both limitations, of embodiment and of discussion of outcomes, closely reflected my own experiences of trauma at the time, and since. I cannot fully embody my reactions, and the personal, political, and relational implications are usually, for a variety of reasons, inexpressible.

In a way, however, the narrowing of my experience and selective silencing of my voice merely reflect the larger issue, namely that this drama was not the one I had originally planned to do at all.

Overall, this drama worked as well as it did only due to the level of trust and experience which already existed in the class, and their consequent ability to continue in the drama even when it felt uncontrolled and frustrating. These and other observations lead me to think this drama, with some tweaking, would in fact make a fine role drama on its own account, even without its connections to a trauma model, offering a chance to play in character with issues of isolation and community, goal-driven interaction with other cultures, life-threatening and confusing interventions, and the necessities of communication within and outside of a closed community. Further, I suspect that student-generated analogies would indeed work better in helping toward comprehension and memory of scientific models, such as the one presented

for trauma. This latter approach would certainly leave more room for empathetic engagement with the impacts of trauma, since it would not force the students into particular roles and rules, but rather allow them form their own.

Theorizing Silence

Disruption

I caught a ride home from the drama with a student from the class, a counsellor who works at U.B.C. During the post-drama de-brief she had mentioned that she had just come from leading an “anxiety group,” and she pointed out that our model applied not just to outright trauma, but also to severe anxiety.

In the car we spoke briefly about this, and then we discussed my work. I mentioned my belief that coherent narrative is more believable than disjointed or non-narrative relating of events, and cited the convincing nature of John Dean during the Watergate hearings, not least because of the fluent narrative quality of his testimony.

“He told the best story,” I said, “So, he was believed.”

Jennifer responded, “People believe what’s said in their own language.” She paused, and then said, “I don’t want to disrupt you.”

“No, no. I really *like* to be disrupted.” I didn’t mention the extent of my recent practice.

“Well. So with Dean, perhaps, the language of white male patriarchy”

I work with words and translation, and questions of language normally absorb me, almost regardless of the context. Jennifer’s comments alerted me to the fact that I had thought almost not at all about the inherent questions of the particular languages of science being used in the materials I had read.

Aphasia

One week following the drama, on Thursday Nov. 27, with Jennifer’s comments about language very much in my mind, I met with a cognitive psychology professor at U.B.C. We had intended to meet prior to the drama, but something arose for him, and we rescheduled. His earlier work was in the realm of

trauma. I was meeting with him, however, not to discuss that work, but rather to try to get some pointers for reading around issues of emotion and empathy. I had heard recently that his current research interests were in the realm of emotion and cognition, and these were the topics I intended to pursue in my next paper.

We had a somewhat fumbling start; despite studying some brain architecture, and despite having recently read a significant amount about, specifically, the amygdala and the hippocampus, I didn't want to risk throwing terms around. This had the effect of making me feel like I was faking it in a rather odd way, as if I knew less than I did, though I told him that I had a Computer Science degree with a Physics application, and mentioned some of the scientists I had recently read. Still, in a field where I am a rank amateur, I'd rather hear something I am already familiar with than miss something I need to know. I was eventually able to express my own guesses about why his area might be relevant to my work, and he was of great help in suggesting reading material for my next paper.

Along the way, however, I mentioned Basil van der Kolk's work. He had two reactions: "His work's kind of shitty," and a little later, that he didn't like his use of "crappy data." I then mentioned van der Kolk's comments about Broca's area, and that I had also read about Broca's aphasia. The professor's response was, "I can see why he would want to say that, because they want to talk about trauma victim's loss of narrative Oh, he's trying to talk about PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)." He then commented about "Broca's patients," pointing out that their speech is compromised in a very specific way, very spasmodic—"with all the small words taken out. This isn't how trauma victims sound at all."

I was a little unsure whether van der Kolk's own research—his own production of data—was suspect, or whether he specifically meant the way van der Kolk used other people's data. He may even have meant that van der Kolk doesn't distinguish between good and bad data. I was too shocked both by the tone and the content of the communication to ask him on the spot, and this wasn't actually the field I wanted to discuss with him anyway. I reverted to empathy and affect and we didn't return to van der Kolk's work.

Unlike the discussion with my classmate, this conversation unpleasantly disrupted me. I had relied mostly on my prior reading in the area of traumatic memory, with some added texts during the brief time I had to prepare this particular drama. I worried that I had misled the class in some very fundamental ways. I was further distressed by the question of *how* someone like me could or should assess the work of someone like van der Kolk. And this distress was intensified by the fact that van der Kolk's particular way of telling this story made better sense of my own experience than any of the other accounts of trauma I had read. At the functional level, having survived my drama trauma, and the trauma drama, I now needed to figure out what and how to write about this confusing mess of event and information.

Re-reading

What now seemed essential? I needed to read or re-read at least some of the literature on traumatic memory with an ear to the language, a focus on where they did and did not seem to agree with van der Kolk, and, almost inevitably, with my own recent experience of traumatic memory in mind.

Several features mark out the work I've been reading about memory, and more recently about trauma. As with the diagrams for the drama, there is a necessary negotiation of intricacy and scale. The books and articles I am reading are somewhat general, for at least two reasons. First, with respect to empathy, I have wanted to see the larger picture, so as to locate empathy within the larger frameworks of memory and the mind. In this newer round of reading I needed to do likewise with trauma. Second, I find the minutiae of individual studies not just unhelpful to my task as defined, but difficult to read, though not impossible with technical dictionaries and textbooks at my side. However, it is also true that at the scale which interests me, any given scientist is also depending on a mental map built up of myriad smaller pieces of more technical research by many different researchers over a very long time.

With respect to difficulty and technicality, the works I read included, at one end, a book in a quite popular tone (Carter 1998), written by a journalist with the help of myriad scientists. At the more complex end they include textbooks and reference books for "... clinicians, neuroscientists, practitioners of neuro-

psychiatry, neuropsychology, and behavioural neurology, and philosophers and neuroanatomists of the mind” (Joseph 1996, v).

I have used my own usual approaches to assessing the validity of these works within their own spheres. To mention just a few, Joseph (1996) was on loan from the psychiatrist then on my committee, a member of the clinical faculty at my university. Schacter’s (1996) work is for a non-technical audience, but he is himself a highly respected researcher, and his work was affirmed by the anti-van der Kolk professor mentioned above. Squire and Kandel (1999) were also affirmed by the professor, and Squire has won a Nobel prize. The three just mentioned are constantly cited in the literature by other scientists, which is another primary tool I use for assessment.

I can also ask the writing to meet common standards for the field. But whether I am reading the works above, or the van der Kolk (recommended by a practising, and very skilled, trauma therapist), I lack the tools to directly determine whether the structures of the experiments and the uses made of them meet the standards of the relevant community. In attempting to decide who to trust, I can only use the means I’ve just mentioned, and in my case, the resonance of those narratives relative to my own experience.

The interaction between these two aspects was evident right away, for though I was distressed by the comments about van der Kolk, and while I was initially shocked, I was also in some ways not entirely surprised at the professor’s assessment. My prior experience of reading science, and especially human brain science, had left me feeling that van der Kolk’s answers were actually too pat, in some ways too *close* to my experience. Particularly on the scale he was discussing, that sort of close fit between experience and the scientific explanations offered, seemed seldom to occur in other rigorous scientific writing. A particular emotion, however, also attached to this intuitive sense, which could perhaps best be labelled as a regretful, “It’s almost too good to be true.” These caveats—my “how the world works” sense of the limits to links between experience and science and my suspicion generated around a deep desire for some strong explanation—had intertwined to leave me with an edge of doubt even prior to the professor’s comments.

Nonetheless, van der Kolk's description of speechlessness had captured me, because the difficulty in talking he refers to is, in my case, very profound. It really does feel physical, as if I can either remember and re-experience the pain or the shock, or talk about it, but not both at the same time. Yet it certainly doesn't feel like the demonstrated vocalizations of Broca's patients. So I began by re-reading about that aphasia, and discovered descriptions which, unsurprisingly, closely mirrored that of the professor: "cookie jar ... fall over ... chair ... water ... empty ..." was one Broca's patient's description of a picture (Carter 1998, 152). This description caught my attention because of its similarity to the communications which had issued from the space station in our drama. When I reflected, I realized that while this sort of utterance was not what I spoke whenever I eventually articulated trauma, it felt very close to the fragmented sensory experience of trauma. If I were to utter what I saw and felt in memory very directly and without any interpretation, in other words somehow without the structuring interference of the cerebral cortex, this is how it might emerge: "altar ... shock ... blue clip ... godfather ... pain ... drugs ... mother ... red clip ... chair ... rope."

I was surprised and quite relieved to discover that not just the bones but many of the details of van der Kolk's account seemed to find broad support in the other sources. Just for example, the summary account in Joseph (1996), allowing for its greater depth and slightly more technical language, lined up perfectly with van der Kolk on the general details. This seemed to narrow the question, relative to the drama as played, to the role of Broca's area. van der Kolk mentions Janet's description of the "speechless terror" which often accompanies trauma, "in which words fail to describe what has happened" (van der Kolk 1996, 286). The section in van der Kolk relevant to Broca's area reads:

[Various] observations suggest that what may most complicate the capacity to communicate about traumatic experiences is that memories of trauma may have no verbal (explicit) component whatsoever. Instead, the memories may have been organized on an implicit or perceptual level, without any accompanying narrative about what happened. Recent symptom provocation neuroimaging studies of people with PTSD support this clinical observation: During the provocation of traumatic memories, there is a decrease in activation of Broca's area—the part of the brain most centrally involved in the transformation of subjective experience into speech (Rauch et al., in press). Simultaneously the areas in the right hemisphere that are thought to process intense emotions and visual images show significantly increased activation. (1996, 287)

In another chapter of the book the author suggests that

... this reflects the tendency in PTSD to experience emotions as physical states rather than as verbally encoded experiences. Our findings suggest that PTSD patients' difficulties with putting feelings into words are mirrored in actual changes in brain activity [These findings] probably mean that during activation of a traumatic memory, the brain is "having" its experience: The person may feel, see, or hear the sensory elements of the traumatic experience. He or she may also be physiologically prevented from translating this experience into communicable language. When PTSD victims are having their traumatic recall, they may suffer from speechless terror in which they may be literally "out of touch with their feelings. (1996, 233-4)

Schacter's use of this study is far more limited, though not negative:

Compared to a nontraumatic control condition, the right amygdala was one of several structures that showed heightened activity during traumatic recall. Interestingly, there was increased activity in areas of visual cortex during traumatic recall along with decreased activity in Broca's area, a key region for language production. These results and other PET data are consistent with the idea that traumatic recollections are characterized by intense and absorbing visual imagery. (Schacter 1996, 216)

Further, in a note belonging to this section, Schacter points out the lack of a control group (presumably a group without PTSD) for this study, but cites a different study with a control group which provides support for Rauch et al (Schacter 1996, 335, note 39). It would appear, then, that the professor's general criticisms of van der Kolk are in some ways supported in this instance. Both his production of data, in the form of the study itself, and his willingness to speculate based upon it could be described as less acceptable than that of Schacter.

I left this phase of my reading feeling that I had not seriously misled the class, and that even with respect to the implication of Broca's area, the class simulation had at least been within the limits of likely explanations. Indeed the loss of coherence in the broadcast really approximated not just the fragmentary nature of sensory recall but oddly enough, even a real Broca's aphasia.

However, a more serious problem now confronted me. All this reading and re-reading, with a focus upon traumatic memory, had confirmed something I'd experienced in reading van der Kolk earlier. His was in fact the best accommodation of the available material, "crap" data or not, to my own experience in a large number of ways. He noted that, "the younger a person was at the time of the trauma, and the more prolonged the trauma was, the greater the likelihood of significant amnesia..." (1996, 285). while at the same time acknowledging that, "... it is relevant that many people with histories of trauma, such as rape, spouse battering, and child abuse, seem to function quite well, as long as feelings related to

traumatic memories are not stirred up" (1996, 284). van der Kolk's only mention of anything to do with the programmed trauma of cults was a negative note about a few "therapists who came to believe in a vast conspiracy of organized satanic ritual abuse" (1996, 566). This comment leaves open the question of whether he believes in any Satanic abuse, as opposed to the conspiracy, but this doesn't particularly bother me, given that he has clearly attempted to engage with the very real evidence he has encountered relative to trauma and the various kinds of memory. This trait of engagement sets him apart from many of the other writers of science about trauma.

I want to focus here only on several of these writers who mention traumatic memory, and who clearly believe that total dissociation of at least some traumatic memory is possible. These writers nonetheless fail me in a variety of ways. Carter, who clearly believes that, "... people often have no memory for the crucial part of some terrifying experience," says:

If a memory is burnt into the amygdala with enough force, it may be almost uncontainable, and trigger such dramatic bodily reactions that a person may re-experience the precipitating trauma, complete with full sensory replay. This condition, post-traumatic stress disorder, is quite clearly linked to a particular experience and so are most frightening memories. Sometimes, though, the amygdala-based unconscious memories flood in without the corresponding conscious recollections that could pin them to a specific event. The irrational fear felt then may be vague—a thin cloud of anxiety—or it may be sudden and intense—a panic attack. If the feeling is provoked by a conscious stimulus, it may show itself as a phobia.

... ..

However, if the trauma is exceptionally severe or prolonged, the stress hormones produced may inhibit or even damage the hippocampus. The conscious memory of a traumatic event or period in someone's life is therefore likely to be fragmented or incomplete. (1998, 95-6)

This description seems accurate as far as it goes, but woefully incomplete. Nothing in this description can actually account for the widely reported re-experience of trauma since these are significant somatic memories with quite specific triggers, not necessarily accompanied by a "thin cloud," nor by a panic attack. Further, there is no explanation for why the process of going through other painful events such as labour and delivery wouldn't constitute "severe and prolonged" trauma. Clearly other factors than those mentioned are involved. Still, the relative scarcity of cult victims, in other words victims of deliberately structured trauma, as compared to victims of other sorts of even quite severe trauma, makes exclusions of this kind understandable.

What really distressed me was to be told, by people who otherwise seemed quite sound in the science, that I didn't exist. Two examples particularly rankled, because the scientists involved clearly accepted the possibility of truly dissociated trauma. Rhawn Joseph addresses my own specific background, when he discusses cult memories as follows:

Repeated instances of intense physical sexual abuse (and associated fear states) are therefore linked to amygdala and temporal lobe activation. Given the amygdala's (and hippocampus') propensity for creating hallucinatory images, including those of a demonic, religious, and sexual nature, it is perhaps not surprising that some children who were sexually abused sometimes report that they were subject to bizarre sexual rituals that involved demonic (Satanic) activities. (Joseph 1996, 583)

While Joseph doesn't precisely say that there are no such things as genuine memories for this sort of cultic abuse, this would seem the clear implication of this passage. I can dispense with Joseph quite promptly, in two ways. It may be true that certain traumatic experiences may lead to false or elaborated memories. Obviously this does not mean that every similar memory is false or elaborated. We may wish for our prime minister to go away. However, the fact that a schizophrenic person may hallucinate the presence of our prime minister does not mean that every sighting of our prime minister is a hallucination, however much we might wish it to be so. Secondly, the models and studies which contribute to Joseph's belief inherently and by definition tell us nothing about what memory will look like for those who *have* been raised in a cult, for example, most especially if the cult is deliberately addressing some of their torture specifically toward the deliberate dissociation of memory.

Schacter is in some ways more specific. He allows for the possibility of prolonged dissociation of memory for trauma. But he then insists that:

... if people become skilled enough at dissociation to develop total amnesia for traumatic experiences, it would imply the existence of a dissociative disorder—a serious matter. If they have engaged in extensive dissociation, then patients who recover previously forgotten memories involving years of horrific abuse *should also have* a documented history of severe pathology that indicates a long-standing dissociative disorder. (Schacter 1996, 262, emphasis mine)

On the next page, he reiterates that there should be “a long and well-marked trail of problems and pathologies” (1996, 263). The same criticism directed at Joseph applies here as well. Schacter has decided

that the absence of a “well-marked trail” must mean that the long-term amnesia *can't* exist. But this in fact tells us nothing about what it would look like if it did exist.

However, Schacter's reasoning is more complex. Let's tease out the implications. Becoming “skilled enough” suggests that repeated experience increases one's capacity for successful dissociation, an extremely useful trait for those, such as cult elites, who might want to actively dissociate someone else's memory. However, his use of “dissociative disorder” is odd. Surely being afflicted by e.g. the dissociated somatic pieces of a past memory, regardless of the quality of someone's life otherwise, constitutes a disorder, or at least a propensity, which is by definition dissociative. He goes beyond this however with his “should also have.” “Should” in what sense?

Schacter here borrows a form common in science. A proper example might be:

If the model mentioned early in this Case Study for the role of the hippocampus is substantially correct, then those who have sustained damage to the hippocampus through injury (including surgical injury), disease (Alzheimer's disease or stroke), or by any other means, *should* be able to remember incidents from before the injury, but find it very difficult or impossible to establish memory for incidents following the injury. In fact, in examining persons with such injuries, this is precisely what is discovered.

The critical aspects of this mode of scientific exposition include a theory under discussion, the results the theory would predict, and the actual results one finds. Schacter's linking of a dissociative state—which is by definition what we're discussing—with the necessity of a strong history of more serious dissociative and other pathologies, is a lazy mobilization of this form, and of its considerable power, without the concurrent rigour of explicating both the theory or theories in question, why he believes they predict a specific outcome, and most especially without any indication of the source for his actual results. These problems hold true both for the specific quote from Schacter above and for the surrounding material. At this point, he bears a more than striking resemblance to the scoutmaster in a Bizarro cartoon (Piraro 1998). Boy scouts are running wildly round one of their peers, who is shining a flashlight into his mouth. The light from the flashlight is then beaming out of the boy's eyes. “That's impossible, Kirkham,” the scoutmaster says, “now stop it right this minute!” Schacter's version is, “That's impossible, so stop existing, right this minute.”

My own therapist was unsurprised at the U.B.C. professor's description of van der Kolk, whom she described as a "*personality*, like a media personality." But she reacted angrily to Schacter's assertions about the impossibility of long-term dissociation of memory, "There are no studies supporting that!" And she seems to be right. There are certainly studies showing significant long-term amnesias for trauma. One study, quoted in virtually every discussion of traumatic amnesia I have seen, looked at women with documented hospital admissions for sexual abuse and discovered that 12% of them had complete amnesia, reporting no history of sexual abuse, while 20% reported that at some period that had experienced no memory for the event, making a total of 32% who had at least at some point no conscious memory at all over the years following the event. A further large number had memory loss for significant parts of the memory, including 39% who failed to remember the hospital admission itself (Schacter 1996, 260). But I have so far discovered no studies which either support or contradict the issue of large-scale long-term dissociation, and indeed van der Kolk notes that, "Surprisingly, since the early part of this century, very few published systematic studies have used patients' own reports to explore the nature of traumatic memory" (1996, 280). Surprising, indeed, and not particularly exploratory, investigative—"scientific."

Scientists can be endlessly inventive when they *want* to discover something, or when they believe in some phenomenon, and simply want to tease out how it works, so I can't help but wonder if Schacter fails to believe in me because no studies exist, or if no studies exist because Schacter and others like him don't believe in me. Conversations with therapists, and with friends who work with street people, suggest that anyone who presents at hospital and begins speaking of cult abuse is quite likely to be deemed psychotic or schizophrenic with little or no further attempt to gauge their state by other accepted means. A more telling fact is that every therapist and pastor I know, and I know many, has encountered people who, though distressed, seem quite sane, and yet claim to have been in cults.

A significant number of therapists have even encountered someone like me who has been abused in a cult context, yet as an adult is functioning adequately or even well, as van der Kolk points out above. They will claim that memory has been fragmentary or virtually non-existent until were adults. They further routinely claim that a substantial portion of what occurred to them was designed precisely to keep

them from remembering, and to entrench control mechanisms to keep them from talking if they did remember.

It is not surprising that many of those who were subjected to these tortures are overtly mentally ill, or have committed suicide. Those of us who have more successfully dissociated still suffer the effects of our experience in many ways. Just as with some victims of sexual abuse, we often do relatively well through early adulthood, only to become depressed and dysfunctional in mid-life, when parents, godparents, and other frightening people begin to die, and when even the best dissociative programming often begins to break down. All of us live with griefs and distresses which are, apparently, literally beyond the comprehension of some of these researchers. But to deny the existence of the mechanisms which have both afflicted and preserved us, precisely *because* we are relatively functional, makes light of both our suffering and our strength without in any way honouring those who have paid a higher price with their health, lives, or sanity.

The failure to grapple more effectively with trauma puzzles van der Kolk, too:

Interestingly, the issue of delayed recall was not controversial when Myers (1940) and Kardiner (1941) gave detailed descriptions of it in their books on combat neuroses; when Sargant and Slater (1941) reported that 144 of 1,000 consecutive admissions to a field hospital had amnesia for their trauma; or when van der Kolk noted it in Vietnam combat veterans (1989) and in a survivor of the Coconut Grove nightclub fire (1987). It appears that as long as men were found to suffer from delayed recall of atrocities committed either by a clearly identifiable enemy or by themselves, this issue was not controversial. (van der Kolk 1996, 566)

Indeed, these various non-controversial studies are cited by virtually everyone who writes about dissociation. As van der Kolk also notes, a number of factors appear to be at work, including the accusations of prolonged sexual abuse which have been coming into the courts. Herman (1997) and others have looked at the politics involved in this shift, and the questions around which sorts of denial are active here would make a worthy subject for some other paper*.

*A recent CBC documentary on the Lord's Liberation Army described the tortures used in inducting child soldiers— isolation, dependence, humiliation, forced cruelty to others—which closely mirrored those used in North American cults. Are we quite sure we are as an entire society immune to these behaviours?

At the level of the individual researcher, however, and with respect to my longer-term interests, some rather odious possibilities suggest themselves. One is the simple disbelief that a group could torture children in this way despite immense evidence over history that many groups have done and still do

If dissociation exists as a protective mechanism in the face of severe trauma, and if at any point in human history this mechanism was evidenced, then my view of human nature says, "Of course certain people will have chosen to make use of that capacity for their own ends."

precisely this sort of thing. The other possibility involves a particular form of scientific hubris: "How could the cults have done this without knowing what we know?" The assumption here is that groups couldn't possibly accomplish this sort of programming without knowledge structured and expressed in specifically scientific ways which could therefore only have emerged in recent years—as if humans haven't been humans all along, and as if the capacities we're discussing haven't been evident. Indeed, Schacter displays just this sort of subtle bias. While he acknowledges that artists and writers have noticed certain things about memory, their comments are not to him "observant," or "accurate," but "prescient," as if they merely foretell, almost by accident, the *real* knowledge the *scientists* are going to give us. In any case, Schacter's *should* does not carry a scientific weight, which leaves to it only a rather moral and retrospective one: *I should* exhibit certain pathologies, so that Schacter can maintain a particular view, not of the brain, but of the world—to do, or rather to *be*, otherwise is really quite obstinate and insensitive of me. The light shone by this particular flashlight is disruptive, as evidenced by the loss of order in his thought, and rather than investigate the mechanism, he tells me that I am impossible.

I suppose I could make a number of responses to both the actual and the imagined comments, by pointing out the extraordinarily detailed corroborating memories of specific incidents which have arisen independently for my siblings and me, as well as for other survivors. Or I could pull out the photographs, which I took after my parents had died, of their cult brands—my father's very coarse mark (after all, his cult was essentially a bunch of hillbilly Ku Klux Klanners), or my mother's very small and elegant star and scimitar—and then compare them to those we all bear. None of these however seems likely to help someone resolutely unwilling or unable to open to the possibilities my existence implies.

In response to all of this reading, I chose, and still choose, to believe in these scientists' fundamental goodwill; it allows me to open to their realities. However, my liking or otherwise of these theorists was rather beside the real point—a comprehensive exam essay which still needed to be written. I was by this point completely lost as to how to write about any of this.

An "Assault" by a "Panhandler"

At about this time, I spent the day of Chinese New Year with a close friend who has worked in the Downtown East side for 25 years. Her email, used with permission, and sent to a constable, describes well what happened (I have changed the names):

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Monday, January 26, 2004 4:54 PM

To:

Subject: Panhandler Assault on Robson Sunday Night

Hi John,

Have not had an experience like this before in 25 years of working DTES, and 3+ years of living on Robson.

Had fun all day yesterday with my friend Karen enjoying the festivities in Chinatown, walking south to shop at the Bay, and going to a nice restaurant on Robson.

We were happy, talking and laughing, walking past Burrard in the 900 Robson, south side of the street, in front of the new Blenz coffee shop. Neither of us had had a drink with supper. Just a really good day, and we were walking to Granville to catch a bus home. It was about 8:40 PM.

A man broke into our conversation, came right up in front of us and asked for "a dime or a quarter". I said "No, not tonight". He turned to Karen, grabbed her by the top of her arms so hard he left bruises, and swore into her face, it looked like he was going to attack her further.

I grabbed the sleeve of his jacket and pulled him back. He let go. I pushed Karen through the door of Blenz, and once we were in, held the door closed. The panhandler yelled through the door something about calling the police. I said "Yes, I'm calling the police." I dialled 911 on my cell. He walked east along Robson. Still on the cell to 911, we followed him once he was half a block away. He saw us, and started running along Robson and then ran up Hornby, and we lost sight of him.

When Karen got home she reported the assault to 911, and spoke with Steve B[ur]ridge, incident # 04-20781.

This morning Karen is bruised, hurting, still shook up, and can't work (she is completing her doctoral thesis).

I'm a lot more shaken than I'd like to admit, and am having to force myself to go out to meetings. Didn't sleep last night for nightmares.

John, is there something more we can do to help get this particular guy off the street? We'd been approached about 10 - 15 panhandlers over the course of the day, yesterday. They were a very mild momentary annoyance. But this incident was physical, rough and terrifying.

Description:

Caucasian male, about 5'10", curly brown hair, either dark blue or dark brown eyes, probably late 20s. He was wearing a black toque, bright blue, puffy nylon, fibril lined type jacket, and dark pants. The curly hair came out under the toque on his forehead. He did not look or smell like he lived outside. He was not thin, and had more colour in his face than an IV drug user. When he ran, he did not run very well or fast, probably not an athlete, but certainly not disabled either.

This incident, coming at this interesting time, threw questions of trauma into a sharp light. While I was indeed shaken up, especially during the first week, I had no nightmares and little disrupted sleep, and I have retained a very acute memory of the incident, which still has a great deal of detail. This event, traumatic in its own way, was nonetheless process-able, more for me than for Sophie, whose sense of safety in her work with street people had been compromised. She in fact showed many signs of denial, to the point of forgetting and then remembering, more than once, comments she made to me about being traumatized by the incident. How odd that she, who wasn't grabbed, illustrated more overtly the model for trauma.

Certain parts of the event and its aftermath, however, nicely illustrate some of the theories mentioned above. When the man grabbed me, my entire energy progressed from a momentary terror into a nearly murderous intent to harm this guy. He was holding me at arm's length, but as I glared into his eyes, the thought clearly crossed my mind that I could kill him if I had to, and I imaged very rapidly my head butting his nose, my knee up into his balls, should he pull me closer. Instead, it felt for a second as if he might push me through the window behind me, a sense my friend also registered. But he clearly read the intent in my eyes. As he dropped my arms, he said, "I see that look in your eyes. If you look at me like that..." by which point Sophie had dragged me into the coffee shop. Yet I was certainly too shocked to scream, and this is confusing, since during other crises—intervening in a gang beating*, breaking my ankle very badly, I have been fully verbal. Nevertheless, in a manner quite similar to events from the role drama—during the crisis, my capacity for verbal communication shut down.

*There were silences there too: Despite the fact that my three friends all got involved in different ways, and that two police officers stood there doing nothing and that dozens of other people also observed the events, the police spokesperson denied to the press that anything had happened.

The more interesting aspects of this new event, however, emerged after the fact. During my interview with the young police constable who came out to my house that night, he mentioned that, "This was assault... if we catch him." I found this hard to absorb. After all, I know something about "assault." Assault is what happened to me, many times, as a child. Assault was 20 large young men beating and kicking one small younger man during the gang violence mentioned above. It's not that I wanted to deny either the violence of this man, or my own hurt; but the word just didn't quite fit for me; it might be technically or legally correct, but it still felt too large a word for the event.

A few days after the incident Sophie sent me an email with this information:

[The constable] called me this morning on my cel. Said he was going on the radio to try to get people to stop giving to panhandlers and give to organizations instead. He wanted me, and if possible also you, Karen, to go on the radio with him and describe the incident. I said No. Reminded him that he and I don't agree on this issue.

I felt sick that I'd appealed to him for help. (personal email)

During a phone call that day, she confirmed that the constable's real goal was to try to move all the panhandlers out of that area. I had a very visceral reaction to this; I felt used, or potentially used, to further someone else's agenda—namely getting the panhandlers out of an area, Robson Street, where they were highly visible, and shuttling them off somewhere to starve out of sight. But this email un-nerfed me in a more personal way as well. As noted in Sophie's email, the man who grabbed me was *not* your average pan-handler. We'd talked to lots of them during the day, and none had been like him. Yet he *had* pan-handled; he had asked Sophie for money. Like the "assault" word, it may have been somehow technically appropriate, but "panhandler" just didn't fit.

At issue wasn't only the technical accuracy of the words. With respect to "panhandler," even using the term suggested that this was the relevant fact. Correlation is not causation, but to use the word panhandler somehow makes this description sound causal—that the man had attacked *because* he was a panhandler. The relevant fact was that this man appeared drugged, and totally nuts, and drunk on some weirdly personal rage. I hadn't yet looked at or spoken to him when he lunged past Sophie to grab me,

yet both of us had the oddest feeling that I somehow reminded him of someone—there was a strange familiarity in his approach.

My experience bore out my assumptions: When I used “assaulted by a panhandler” people were horrified for me, beyond what the damage demanded. And they didn’t ask any further questions about the man. I believe they saw an obviously homeless panhandler, and I believe they imagined me being punched or perhaps knocked down. If, on the other hand, I said “I was grabbed by a guy,” I was in for a major cross-examination. The end result was that I didn’t tell some people I might have otherwise told, had I been “assaulted” by someone I felt free to call a “panhandler.” It was just too complicated.

This would have been a great time to show my bruises. I felt as if I might thus be able to demonstrate and yet limit the extent of what had happened. But at just this critical time, my body chose to betray me in a way highly reminiscent of the betrayals of dissociation. While my back was sore and my arms ached and cramped for days it soon became obvious that I was going to have little bruising beyond a couple of small marks on the back of each arm from his fingertips and thumb-wide smudges on the front. Instead, I had on either arm a hard lump right next to the bone, a “haematoma” my doctor said. I called a friend to joke that even my arms knew how to dissociate. In traumatic dissociation, too, the memories present themselves in an unrecognizable form—they don’t “look like” normal memory—so they can be explained away.

I was in fact feeling beset by silences, actively encompassed and smothered by them. Perhaps the most benign was that arising from the incommensurability of languages: I was finding it almost impossible to pick even which language to write in. (See “Writing Voices,” above) Then there was the misfit between van der Kolk’s empathetic treatment and a respected professor’s assessment of his work, provoking something a little like despair precisely because van der Kolk’s narrative with its close attention to my kind of experience engendered such a sense of hope deferred. My own silence with that scientist was terribly frustrating: an inability to risk either his belief, or his disbelief, since either might well lead him to decide I was mentally unwell in some other, more recognizable, more acceptable, way.

There was the further noisy silence of substituting the one drama for the other, of being unable to expose what I wanted to expose, and the fact that the drama I produced felt, both in tone and in substance, dissociated, a fragment related to but not at the center of the experience I had hoped to evoke. And now, as I dealt with this lesser trauma in my life outside academe, I was facing a whole range of similar silences: my own failure to scream at the time, the failure of language in trying to describe what had happened, the failure of even my own flesh to provide the evidence, and to top it all off a situation where neither being believed nor disbelieved was acceptable, since disbelief diminished the real violence I had faced, but belief on the part of the police was threatening to yield completely unacceptable results.

However, as I wrote the poem which opens this paper, I began to see the attack by this man as a sort of lived metaphor for the many other silences which seemed to grip me. This way of engaging the attack let me get down to writing the remainder of this paper, because I realized the situation with the man who grabbed me indeed mirrored my situation with Schacter *et al* in multiple ways. It was perfectly clear that what happened is not “psychological” or “psychosomatic” in some *étsem*-denying way—I had large lumps embedded in both arms. But the damage done to me as a child is also not “psychological” or “psychosomatic” if this means that what happened left its mark only upon some ether of “mind” which sits separate from my corpus, since that damage is, if outwardly invisible, nonetheless inscribed in my body, in my flesh.

Schacter makes it plain that, in at least one way, he wants precisely what I wanted after I was grabbed. He wants the evidence, the “well marked trail,” and he wants it on the surface where he can see it; we *should* be giving him at least this. I too wanted my surface bruises, but two things are true. The first is that the damage was too great for mere bruises; my doctor believed the swelling was literally at bone-level, below the outer sheath which covers the bone itself. The second was that, given the violence with which the man grabbed me, my arms isolated the damage and dealt with it, thereby allowing me, after a few days, to get on with my business. Eventually these hard knots softened, and then dissolved.

Cats and Case Studies

In reality, people like me are precisely what the Schacters of the world need in order to understand why the phenomena they describe exist at all. I am not an evolutionary scientist, but I suspect one would say that my reactions to trauma have done precisely what they *should* do. The exceptional quality of my own survival, and that of my siblings, shows precisely the adaptive power of these mechanisms. The presence or absence of joy in our lives, our nightmares, the occasional confusing or terrifying flashback, were beside the point, given that we were able to grow, to evoke care from a tribe of friends, to mate, to produce offspring, and to care for them. We have all, along the way, built strong long-lasting marriages and have held down responsible jobs. In Schacter's strange universe, the fact that we are well enough to accomplish these things means not that we are sane enough to be believed but *too* sane to be believed. If the man had broken my arm, if I had a cast, things would have been far clearer, far more convenient for me and for others. This would count as assault. But even livid bruises would have helped.

Barone and Eisner quote Polanyi, "We know more than we can tell" (1997, 90). This is true of our *'étsemim* in a general way. They retain memories in the form of physical changes which have no words attached, nor even coherent images. At one level I am not unhappy about this, even when the outcome is pain. Even with the words or images lost or detached from the somatic events, my *'étsem* bears

"Bearing witness is optional if other witnesses are present," explained the Imam Effendi, "but, in situations where there was only one witness, it is the will of God that one bear witness." (Wesley 1990, 74; Fels 1999)

sometimes incomprehensible witness to what happened to me. The only *dysfunctional* part of this memory has to do with wanting to tell and being

unable to do so. This is like the impact of the cop on my easy re-telling. To tell, I need the coherent memory I don't have, rather than the fragments. But if I can only have buried fragments, at least I have those. It would be far worse to have nothing, to have lived through what I did, with no witness even in my bones. Meanwhile, the reality of my relative ability to cope helps me forgive my *'étsem*—to forgive the pain and the fear in particular which have attended its choices, even when those choices were initially deliberately imposed upon it from outside. I bear at bone level the marks of what was done to me, but I

live, and love, and empathise. I sequester the injury and slowly heal, and get on with my life in the meantime.

Which leads us back to van der Kolk. He too writes in the cadences of the scientist. His prose is indistinguishable in style, tone, and vocabulary, in the proposing of theories and the mobilising of evidence, from the various other scientists I've read. But he expresses the existing science, good or "shitty," in a way that makes it clear not only that he believes, but that he has listened hard and well to "hundreds" of survivors and those who care for them (1996, 287). He translates the science as if into his first language. He has not only listened well to those who have barely survived but also to those like me who have survived so well that the trauma is not completely evident on the surface. As with any writer, I have problems with some of his formulations, a number of which arise from his nesting of his work within the designation of PTSD. I am deeply resistant, for example, to calling my re-experienced pain or throttling PTSD. Though it certainly arises *post* a series of very *traumatic stresses*, a *disorder* somehow calls up something less deliberately invoked, say a blood disorder like leukemia. Apply this word, if you must, *post* train wreck, not *post* cult. I am even less happy when I hear or read descriptions of "dissociative disorders."

The memory of survivors of severe trauma is disordered. But the dissociation is not the problem, it is a solution which allowed and allows those survivors to survive the trauma. Treating dissociation in this context as a disorder is like treating the scar over a knife wound as a disorder. The disorder is not the dissociation but the adults who inflicted the trauma. Or in the case of parents who have lost a young child to a random drive-by shooting, the disease is an entire complex of freely chosen actions, and societal apathy, and the human capacity for unfocussed violence. Their dissociation in the face of the trauma is their system's best effort at healing. However, this problem is not van der Kolk's alone, and he is adopting the standard approach to describing these aspects of trauma studies.

van der Kolk engages the attention and belief of survivors and therapists because he privileges the experience of the survivors and of those who care for them, and most importantly because he speaks their language as if it were his own. And in so doing he affirms the unity of being—that we aren't bodies with

minds which somehow float free, and which can be wounded apart from our flesh. In one way, this description makes van der Kolk's genre, in content if not in form, sound more like art than science, more like empathic narrative than neurological journal writing.

Barone and Eisner suggest that, "Scientific work is not concerned with *that* cat, but with cats. Case studies, which are almost always the focus of artistically based inquiry, address particular circumstances that do not necessarily represent the features of any particular population" (1997, 84). van der Kolk has attended rather closely to many case studies of individual cats, and yet appears not to be the most careful or thorough of scientists, and has therefore fitted the evidence too easily into his believing view. Schacter has attended rather closely to a population of brains, but seems *a priori* not to believe in the existence of that same group of cats.

At this point Schrödinger's cat, the famous illustration of the way observation can determine quantum reality, comes to mind (Figure 5).

The cat goes in the box alive and whole. There is a 50/50 chance that the hammer will fall on a bottle of cyanide, killing the cat.* When the box is opened, the cat is discovered to be either alive or dead but, under quantum rules, this outcome is a *result* of the act of observation. In my case, the cat goes into the box alive and whole, but when the box is opened, the act of observation creates either a cat without a believable brain, or a disembodied brain without a believable cat. Fortunately, it seems to be only at the quantum level that such observations create reality. I didn't ask to be this sort of cat, to be locked in a box (it was actually often a dank room by a swimming pool), to have my life put at risk, but if I must be that sort of cat, I'd rather be observed whole.

So what am I afraid of?

A continued schism between those who believe—who try to translate—and those who do good scientific work.

And what do I want

I want the research about cats to meet adequate criteria for good research into cats, and also to make sense of my own case study, of my experience as a cat. I want not just to be an *'étsem*, which of course I neces-

sarily am, but to have that *'étsem* represented holistically in the literature which supposedly addresses the brain-level aspects of my experience. I am hoping that in some way van der Kolk is a sort of place holder for those who could come behind him and fill in with really good scientific interpretation. I want scientists to explore the phenomena which compose this aspect of my life, to refuse the easy absence of bruises and attend to the *'étsem* of the matter. I want a merger, a mating, a unity between those who believe and listen, and those who are better at the harder sciences, or at least some meeting at the level of their theories. Why? For better understanding, of course, and toward better treatment.

But this is not a purely solipsistic desire; surely those of us who have, in Schacter's terms, become "skilled" at such extreme dissociation have something to offer in these studies. Take again the specific issue of speechlessness: Clearly the speech difficulties which occur when I first attempt to describe trauma are not simply a result of some impairment of blood flow to Broca's area, since that impairment should lead to a quite specific pattern of speech impairment. van der Kolk, on this point, has been too easily satisfied. What is the more complex process which underlies this phenomenon? And what does that more complex process tell us about the processing of memory and other brain functions? Is this process related somehow to the fact that experience of isolated somatic memories tends to fade as more normal memory is established?

At some sort of transcendental level, this shift in the form of memory feels like an appropriate resolution—that by recalling and restoring the memory in a more proper form, the "improper" memory dissipates. However, it is far from clear to me why this mutual exclusivity should be so at the brain level. And it seems a real pity that the cults knew enough to use this astonishing capacity of my *'étsem*, but as far as I have currently read, many researchers supposedly critically interested in traumatic dissociation haven't pursued the question of what brains like mine could tell them.

I am not here asking these scientists for some mention of the haematomas of the *'étsem* inflicted upon children by adults who care for them, nor, for now, of the systematic and deliberate dissociative torture practiced by cults. It is just tempting to want scientists (perish the thought) to act more—how we shall put this—*scientific*: To be consistent and inquisitive in their approach to this material. To treat dif-

difficult and unexpected phenomena as realities rather to be explored than repressed. For example, with respect to Broca's area, given that there are suggestive similarities, why not seek to find out what precisely differs in people who are traumatized as compared to those who have experienced other sorts of injuries from strokes or accidents. I will admit, just as in presenting the drama, I might have liked a way to force some form of empathy upon the participants, that it is tempting to want a language with which I could compel others to believe, but the larger implications of this power would be horrifying, and closely allied to what was done to me. I suppose then, that I'd like to find the language I need to *allow* them to believe in the mechanisms which have made these things possible. As in the poem which opens this paper, I would like something which speaks with precision, but neither language nor the body have within them this capacity. Nonetheless, I want some means by which to open a space for communication, to allow people the choice, to urge them to ask the question, which is equivalent to shaking up their certainties.

Coda

Coda: A few measures or a section added to the end of a piece of music to make a more effective ending (Public Schools of North Carolina 2006).

I believe Case Study III and the processes around it succeed in many of the goals I set out to achieve. I believe, for example, that at least some of the participants in the drama have learned a new way to view trauma and that this will help them to empathize with sufferers of extreme trauma, especially in their difficulties of communication. I can further reasonably hope that the participants in the drama have learned, as I did, to question precisely who is an alien within a given world.

I also believe my dissertation committee, who have expressed in their written comments on my thesis, even in their corrections, a coherent grasp of at least some of the principles I am trying to communicate. They have further, in those comments, indicated an empathic grasp of my own situation which has frequently left me moved, almost to the point of shock. However, I believe there is something left to be learned about empathy from the failures and difficulties, many unresolved, which arose around this Case Study.

I could say that Case Study III consists of a series of analogies for the failures of memory and communication which occur under trauma. If I ask whether these analogies succeed at their attempts, I see analogies—structured descriptions which seek to parallel and thereby elucidate the realities of trauma—each of which both succeeds and fails in some way: I failed to present the first drama at all, through issues of physical and psychic torment. The second drama worked well in certain ways, but in structuring it I presented material with respect to a central part of its model which was suspect as science. Despite intense revision and help from my usual pantheon of editors, the poem which opens the Case Study has failed to fall into a shape which seems to express what I am trying to express.

Further, I could not, and still can't, identify a sense of the proper audience for this Case Study, and therefore have failed to find a voice in which I can comfortably write. Partly as a result, this Case Study doesn't have the coherence of either the first or second essays; that coherence has been lost in the

attempt to bring a more creative, narrative, flexible, and genre-bending approach to the material, which itself includes several quite different genres. It is as good as I could make it, but when I read it, I am reminded of raisin bread—a dough of narrative with chewy chunks of science and poetry blended in.* I worry that the piling of analogy upon analogy simply doesn't achieve a mass

*And I'm not fond of raisins.

sufficient to the gravity of the situation. Even the inclusion of Schrodinger's Cat** seems inadequate.

**When I put it this way, I think, "Well *honestly*, Karen, how *did* you expect a confusing principle of quantum physics, analogized by means of a violent image, to help, precisely?"

Further, even as I write this, a vortex of other people's

likely disbelief of my experience warps my own knowledge of the truth of this essential claim, pulls at it, tempts me to think instead thoughts which would be more believable, more palatable, even at the cost of my sanity as sanity is normally constituted—namely accepting what actually happened to me. This Case Study originally included extensive descriptions of trauma which, while clinical, were far more graphic. I also removed an entire creative essay discussing, amongst other things, both the worst of the traumas, and the many ways in which the members of my family were also profoundly average. I have removed them for reasons similar to those which led to cancelling the first drama, my physical and emotional health, but also because I could not reason my way by rational or emotional cognition to a sense of their likely reception by my readers. The conflicts between what I want and what I fear seem especially acute when I ponder this Case Study.

What do I want?

To trust in the existence of empathetic listeners who will believe in me.

What do I fear?

That, for a variety of reasons, these readers may not exist.

Every chapter in any thesis necessarily fails in some ways, so this is an uninteresting fact to notice about my own. However, my perceived failures and difficulties in this context cause me to think of the failures I've already noted in Reinhard and Schacter. I have indicated ways in which both Reinhard's and Schacter's texts fail at empathy in the realm of trauma. It is easy, when I am focussed upon the realm of ethics, and therefore choice, to state what I want from people who write about trauma, and then detail

the ways I don't get what I want. But this approach suggests that because they are scientists, they have some sort of rational mind that can be sequestered, like a jury, or a haematoma, to deliberate apart from the rest of their being. But if I can't entirely get what I want even from myself, and can't see how to get it, perhaps it is time to ask, "Why?" When I do so, I return to the realm of explanation represented by Case Study I, and I become aware that these specific failures and difficulties may actually succeed through accumulation; they are in the aggregate interlinked and like Lacan's silences point to something Real, which inhabits the deeper gap between events which have occurred and the possible articulations of them.

Explanations

For example, my own failure to establish a stable sense of audience, to assess what sorts of writing about what sorts of topics might *work*, are representative of a larger issue—we all write to an audience all the time. My attempts to find the right word after I was grabbed on the street are illustrative. At the time it felt critically necessary to "get it right. What precisely was "getting it right"? Neither over- nor understating happened. But why was that so important? Not, at this level of trauma, because I thought I wouldn't be believed, but because I want the right thing to be believed. There are consequences both to disbelief and to adequate belief but in the wrong thing. The police officer who wanted to move all the street people out of sight was able to believe the wrong thing.

But each of these struggles was a negotiation with an internal audience, a constructed group, the beholders of my description. If I used "panhandler," I was afraid they'd envision someone who lives outdoors and panhandles, their clothes loose and dirty, their hand out. If I used "assault" I thought they would envision something far more violent than what occurred, perhaps punches thrown, or me being knocked to the ground. My worries had to do with miss-leading my audience. In the end I chose not to say anything at all unless I could explain in detail.

As a professional whose career achievements nest with a certain field, Schacter especially would face enormous internal reasons to retain a high level of scepticism. Academics and scientists write

largely for their professional peers, and at least one possibility must be that of professional censure. I have had personal conversations now with many psychologists and some psychiatrists who work with cult victims, some of whom also conduct research. Every one has faced censure and derision from peers who believe that they are at best credulous and deluded, and at worst fundamentally unwell themselves and therefore misleading their clients, perhaps to the point of generating psychosis. This assessment is lobbed no matter how careful any given psychologist may be to observe all aspects of best practice, including never divulging material in advance of a clients' own recognitions.* If one's professional field, psychology, has a large number of people resistant to the possibility of certain manifestations of trauma, this must promote two outcomes. A psychologist encountering one of these manifestations would quite probably feel inclined to depend upon the general opinion of his or her peers, with good reason. But the less savoury possibility includes a pressure, which could be quite subconscious, not to take the risk of championing a view which other people are not just unsure about, but actively derisive of, even when the evidence suggests one ought at least to have an open mind.

*My first therapist knew for months that I had been in a cult before I finally labelled it for myself. Despite the considerable relief both of us might have felt in having her state it for me, she somehow kept her silence as I, described altars and robes and insisted repeatedly that, "My parents had really strange friends."

Another explanation for resistance to the combination of empathy and belief arises when we consider action. Vetlesen describes three moral levels: "As I define it, moral performance runs through a sequence made up of three distinct levels: perception, judgment, and action" (1994, 4). While, in our definitions, we've separated empathy from any *necessary* outcomes, the level of action is relevant here. There is no reason to believe that the lines of influence amongst these may only run in one direction. It is perfectly possible that a necessity for action could, especially as one gains experience of the world, lead to alterations and suppressions within our judgments and perceptions.

Similarly, Anne Chinnery suggests that responsibility has three aspects, passivity, heteronomy and inescapability: "Responsibility is about surrender and openness to the other; about saying "yes" to the otherness of the other; and about suffering through anxious situations not of our own making, but to which we are nonetheless called to respond" (Chinnery 2003, 7). We have discussed empathy in terms which include the possibilities of openness, and of saying "yes" to the state of the other. However, the

inescapability of response is not necessarily dependent on the other two aspects in a unilateral direction. The inescapability of response could easily provide a pressure, perhaps quite hidden, to avoid the precursors. Humans learn well, and experience with situations which led from empathy and belief to a call to necessary performance of unpleasant action could easily train any of us to experience degrees of resistance to the empathy and belief. If action will be costly, difficult, or repellent for any reason, this alone provides a believable deterrent to the prior conditions. The necessity for decision and action suggested by Vetlesen and Chinnery, then, are prone to generate denial of the kind discussed in Case Study II.

Another pressure upon someone like Schacter might be loosely described as his probable worldview. In discussing Bishop Berkeley above, I mentioned that the loss of current belief in his sort of God leads to misunderstandings of his work. Similarly, any scientist who believes in a strictly material world might be unlikely to believe in the power or efficacy of Satanic Worship. A personal inability to grasp the beliefs and motivations underlying a cult could lead to a further unarticulated belief that *no one* today would be likely to hold such beliefs and practices. To empathise and believe with even one cult survivor is to accept that people now—in my case people not noticeably different from their non-cult neighbours—engage in beliefs and practices which are for many, unimaginable. Thus for an individual to take my existence seriously is to accept a change in their fundamental understanding about people today in our society.

Having up to one point in his text made empathy a usual precondition for moral perception and action, Arne Vetlesen then points out that “Individuals are not free to pick just any moral objects they would like. Perception does not start from scratch; it is guided, channelled, given a specific horizon, direction and target by society” (Vetlesen 1994, 194). In the end, the direction of influence may be reversed such that this channelling of perception “blocks” empathy.

If anything is established beyond doubt in the course of this discussion, it is that the faculty of empathy, so decisive in our reaching toward others as human and moral others, is a faculty that is exceedingly vulnerable to societal manipulation This shows that empathy as required in moral perception is utterly indispensable and utterly precarious, it must be allowed to operate, to reach out toward and recognize (*anerkennen*) its specific object for moral concern to prevail, yet it is always susceptible to the larger-than-individual forces that in every society help channel the activi-

zation or nonactivization of the individual's emotional as well as cognitive-sensuous abilities. (Vetlesen 1994, 195)

I can't possibly *know* which factors influence Daniel Schacter's or others' emotional and cognitive-sensuous abilities; I can certainly guess that some or all of these factors influence the shape of psychological approaches to the ongoing impacts of serious trauma.

Explicitly Empathic Explanations

Empathy itself may have some direct clues to offer in explanation of textual denial. In those places where Case Study III struggles, it does so not only due to all the ways in which words fail generally, but at least in part because empathy itself generates difficulties within witnesses of trauma, including readers and writers of trauma. These are points not where language fails to convey meaning, but where, by succeeding too well, it would generate an impact opposite to that intended by the writer.

Writers are human too, and subject to all the impacts of empathy we are discussing. This writer, I, self-limit in an attempt to find the edge, the knife edge where belief and empathy can co-exist. The two quite different aspects of empathy we've repeatedly mentioned present themselves in this explanatory context. The unwilling, intuitive mirroring of empathy appears most helpful when we assess the impact of engaging with and being open to the victims of trauma and representations of their experiences.

DIRECT UNWILLED EMPATHY

A review of the study of lovers (Introduction) suggests that "Empathy for pain mirrors the suffering—but not the physical pain—in the same brain regions" (Holden 2004, 1121). Surely this is the experience of most of us in empathy: If my lover's hand is burned, I do not experience a burning sensation on my hand, but I do experience suffering in response to their suffering or presumed suffering. "Empathizing," says Theodor Lipps, "is experiencing. It is not just simply *knowing that* somewhere in the outer world there is something mental or inward, some joy, sorrow, woe or despair, nor is it merely imaging such things" (Lipps 1905/1965, 411). Because it entails *experiencing* these things, empathy can lead to real trauma in the beholder. If the model's trauma is not of a relatively minor kind, but rather that of chil-

dren freezing to death on a high mountain or being systematically tortured in a cult context this secondary suffering can be very acute indeed, and therefore aversive.

Julie Salverson mentions the potential intersection of trauma with our own past experiences: “Encounters with the difficult knowledge of trauma have the potential to set in motion dynamics of identification and defence that play out the uneasy negotiation between one’s own experience of loss and another’s account”(2006, 150). When our own memories of acute trauma or our own most serious losses are invoked, our emotional reactions are intensified. While each individual’s capacity for empathy varies with each situation, I can certainly attest to having turned my eyes away for each of the reasons above, to having had enough, to being unable to continue witnessing another’s pain.

This dissertation has not theorized the motivations for empathy, but they can be taken to exist. In my life the experiences of both giving and receiving empathy around trauma generate not pleasure, precisely, but a certain species of joy in being, for example, with a friend who is gripped by grief. I am convinced that some deep good is served both by extending and receiving the ministry of empathy. But whatever pleasures or satisfactions the extension of empathy invokes, and they are many, they can only compete up to a certain point with this aversive impact generated by empathy with trauma. Lipps notes that the feeling of empathic aversion when we are “entered” by a stimulus can be so strong that we experience the stimulus as “hostile to me, directed against me” (Lipps 1905/1965, 408). We find ourselves mounting a defence against this attack. As the source of both sides of the experience, empathy has at this point become a sort of fulcrum or knife edge.

BEING “IN SOMEONE’S SHOES”

Julie Salverson, too, acknowledges “the possible vulnerability or damage in oneself as a listener to stories of violence.” In doing so she posits another aspect to our reactions to pain beyond direct affective mirroring or the triggering of our own traumatic response.

The problem for the witness seeking to represent accounts of violence, then, is the danger of fixing trauma in presumed configurations of how loss looks and sounds. Presumptions and preconceptions about pain and how to recognize it restrict the ability of a potential witness to perceive strength and resilience in a survivor ” (2006, 150).

The denial which results from such fixed configurations can witness to the enacting of a personal and in one way quite lovely empathy—something along the lines of, “I couldn’t have survived or lived well if this had happened to me. So if someone is living well, it can’t have happened to them.” The more odious outworkings of this denial appear in Schacter, for whom I must not exist, since if I exist I *ought* to exhibit much more serious dysfunction than I in fact do. While we’ve already discussed the impossibility of fully adopting another’s state, we are in the realm of empathy commonly comprehended by the idea of being “in another’s shoes.”

Empathy with victims—this could happen to me

When the trauma in question is too severe, is *un-thinkable*, we do indeed find ways *not* to think it so as not to be traumatized by it. Empathy with the children in Reinhard’s article would entail asking what it would be like to march up these mountains. If they knew of their impending deaths, I imagine it would entail knowing fear. Reinhard guesses they were drugged with chicha—what is it like to go into that drunken stupor? And if they weren’t drugged, what is it like to freeze? We can never know or even guess in detail what these events entailed for these children, our empathic mirrors will always be inadequate, but we are talking about very fundamental human reactions here, physical suffering, and the fear of death, and most of us have very direct aversions to these experiences, and to their mirrored representations in our minds.

One possible reaction to another’s trauma, or to depictions of trauma, is “I’m so glad it’s not me.” But when we ask the fundamental question of conscious empathy “What would this be like if it happened to me?” we are, in another way acknowledging that it *could* happen to me. If I can’t face this possibility in my own life, then I am experiencing another deep level of aversion, and especially of denial, a denial which can work its way backward, as suggested above, into a suppression of empathy itself.

The closer the victim’s circumstances to those of our own lives, the higher the costs of empathy. Empathy with Incan children from many years ago is very difficult to achieve—we can assume relatively fewer points of contact between their lives and ours, and are thereby spared certain empathic costs. The more similar the life of the model to my own, the more likely I am to empathize quite strongly, at which

point my instinctive mirroring, the necessity for response, my own fears that this could happen to me or to my own children, all provide powerful reasons to pre-emptively avert that empathy.

Empathy with adults—I could do this

But to ask in the context of deliberately inflicted trauma, whether Incan or current day, “What if this happened to me?” is only to pose only one half of the empathic question. In Jacyntha England’s drama (above), my chosen empathy with a pool attendant became, “What would it be like if I were the one to deny this boy access to this pool?” The greatest power of these dramas, in my limited experience, is precisely that the empathic question, when addressed to not a victim but to a perpetrator of violence, challenges my presuppositions about my own responses.

van der Kolk, in his quote above, notes that, “It appears that as long as men were found to suffer from delayed recall of atrocities committed either by a clearly identifiable enemy [in wartime] or by themselves, this issue [of traumatic dissociation] was not controversial” (van der Kolk 1996, 566). If the perpetrator of an atrocity is not a definable enemy or a suicidal man, but rather a member of my own society, the possibility of empathy lurks very unpleasantly, waiting to pose the question, “What would it be like to commit these acts?” To ask the question is to suggest at least the possibility that I *could* commit them.

Empathy with a long dead Incan priest is difficult—our circumstances are so different. Recent torturers may be very like us—same broad culture, similar background, apparently ordered lives—in the case of my parents, military, educated, cultured, and according to their innocent friends, quite charming. One was musical, the other a very good cook. Both had wonderful senses of humour and cared deeply about their children’s achievements and well-being at school. Empathy with people like these is far easier. It requires for its suppression a more adamant defence. I cannot know whether any of the mechanisms above hold true for any other writer. I can point out, however, that while Reinhard skirts around the issues and avoids as much as possible active empathy with either the children or their sacrificers, Schacter, addressing temporally and geographically immediate situations, goes so far as to make sure that, theoretically, neither party to my sort of sacrifice exists.

Lipps points out the link between empathy with positive and negative states in the model: “A glimpse of a laughing face,” he points out, will “stimulate the viewer to feel gay and free and happy” (Lipps 1905/1965, 409). But what if the face is “mockingly amusing”? Then we will feel displeasure, and the intensity of the displeasure will be closely linked to the extent to which I have given myself over to the image. Lipps’ reasoning here is convoluted, but amounts to this: We are engaging in empathy with this mocking face. We allow it to work on us just as would a sincerely laughing face, so we are inhabiting the object we are viewing, in Vischer’s sense of projecting ourselves fully into that unpleasant visage. It is precisely this connection which intensifies our displeasure. The unspoken link appears to be that precisely our own past experience of, in this example, *having been ourselves* in a state of mocking amusement intensifies our displeasure (Lipps 1905/1965, 409-10). In this example, the mockery is addressed at us, and our empathy helps us to recognize it. But it is equally true that empathising with those who commit violence may lead us to recognize our own, should it exist. If we dissociate a propensity to violence which is still a part of our genetic makeup, but which is no longer acceptable in our immediate society,

*Are our prosecutions of distant wars, even at the cost of some of our children, symptoms of this dissociation at the larger social level?

then empathy with one who commits violence threatens that dissociation.*

Just as the definitions of sacrifice provide a potent mechanism for denial that we or anyone like us could commit this sort of act, so too definitions of traumatic dissociation provide a powerful defence against a similar possibility. In the corner of one page of an earlier version of Case Study II, next to my suggestions about empathy with the Incan adults, one of my dissertation committee members has written, “I think empathy and sacrifice are oxymorons.” This coda argues, rather, that empathy with all the parties to a trauma will threaten any preconceptions which try to place either victims or victimizers outside the human realm that all of us inhabit. The evasions, denials and silences embodied in writings by Reinhard, by Schacter, by me, are in part a direct result of empathy in its many forms.

As If

Of course, I cannot force any writer to undertake the changes which would satisfy my demands for empathy-friendly texts. As Salverson points out, “To become a witness is to be exposed, vulnerable, to have something at stake. The nature of the risk will vary, as will the negotiations of acceptance or refusal” (2006, 2), which means I am asking these writers to take a risk, to have something significant at stake. Within certain limits of temperament and ability they can choose for or against being this sort of witness. If I, who have lived a gothic trauma, am subject to the entire range of influences mentioned above, how much more may they influence those like Reinhard and Schacter? Even if there were a specialized language, a grammar of trauma, which somehow ensured the right word, the proper signification, the exact communication of trauma, perhaps the empathic price is too high. Perhaps some writers cannot afford to learn the language precisely because they can’t afford to believe in their own mechanisms of silence, of dissociation, of complicity. Such belief would be asking them to accept within their *‘étsem* the potential reality of those events whose inscriptions for now lie so conveniently hidden, against the bone, under the skin. They may in fact already be doing their best.

But what is a writer to do if empathy itself can lead to the shutting down of engagement, of openness? If empathy, rather than leading to moral action, can instead lead to the evasion of moral perception? Is all lost in the attempt? Clearly not. Each of us has in reading a novel or a poem or a journalistic thought, “Ahh... so this is how it would be if this happened to me.” What is at play in the writing when this interaction occurs successfully?

Notably missing from the discussion above is Rogers’ *as if*—the constant recognition that empathy does mean that we *become* the model, or even that we *fully adopt* their state, but rather that we retain a clear sense of our difference and separateness no matter how fully we empathize. Silence can be a very direct result of a missing *as if*. I originally wrote this Case Study as a comprehensive essay, and intended at the time to include it in the dissertation. But I turned in a nearly final draft of the thesis without Case Study III included, both because I knew I would experience further physical distress and because I could not anticipate its impact on you, the readers.

The people involved in suppressing what happened to me used extreme pain, near-death experiences and electroshock to ensure that we would never talk, and I have in the last few days re-experienced them all. My various immediate family members have died in nightmares at a rate of about one per night. Yet I am fully present to the work I am doing, at points enjoying it very much, and no one is standing behind me with their hands on my neck. The electrodes are not attached. What is this bodily sensation I experience as I attempt to write about my trauma but a very physical failure of the *as if*?

Just as in empathy we do not normally experience the actual physical sensation of the model, we don't normally re-experience the actual physical sensations when we remember an incident. Even quite briefly after breaking an ankle or delivering a child—as soon as the pain has subsided in fact—I remember the pain *as if* it happened to me.

Only in traumatic, dissociated pain do I *re-experience* pain or discomfort. As a result, we also never, until we by some means resolve the trauma, reach the point the point of saying, “Oh it's so long ago, it's *as if* it happened to somebody else.” It doesn't matter that in every other area of our lives we might say, as I've heard many others say, “I was a different person then,” because the discomfort is always happening right now.

Paradoxically enough, for those of us who have experienced severe trauma, until our memories of trauma become more consolidated, until they function more like ordinary memory, we also can't experience the trauma *as if* it happened to us. Too many pieces are missing. When one talks of a disembodied experience, one usually means an experience in which mental or affective components are present, but one's body seems distant. Until we reach a point of healing where all aspects of memory co-operate, we experience our bodies as all too present, but without the mental and emotional information attached which would make the original trauma real to us, and to others. If our trauma, our experience past and present, is neither our own nor someone else's, it is *as if* the trauma is no one's, *as if* it does not exist at all.

A hint of a more proper *as if* arises from the studies in which participants wrote about “imaginary” traumas which were actually accounts of real traumas, but not their own. In doing Theatre of the Oppressed, the stories of many individual participants are brought together and a drama shaped from their

experience. Finding a balance between the individual stories and the need to present a drama is difficult. “The challenge for artists and educators, it seems to me, is to walk the delicate balance between honouring the stories of the group members while not withholding the political, theatrical, and pedagogical expertise that brought them to the workshop in the first place” (Salverson 2006, 148). I would suggest that is precisely the act of making art which helps to titrate the trauma by generating the alternative *as if*. The participants can engage in the trauma *as if* it were about someone else, constructing a drama which is in the end the story of no single participant.

Similarly, when a writer allows herself to engage with someone else’s very serious trauma empathically, she is writing about experience which is real, but not her own. If she allows herself to be overwhelmed, if she becomes lost in my life, my experience, she helps me very little. But when she remembers herself as a writer and brings to bear her political, theatrical and pedagogical expertise, she makes my experience imaginary in the sense that she puts it in the realm of the *as if*. While there must be the recognition and respect of alterity, there is a beautiful interchange here—if a witness can treat my trauma *as if* it is their own, a space is created in which I may treat my trauma *as if* it is someone else’s.

Art constructed in this way seems the most likely to open out into possibilities of empathy in others. As Lipps has pointed out, when I view (or read) art, “I must ignore the fact that... I may be helped or harmed by [the object], and I can enter more fully into the ideal world represented by the work. This in turn allows me to “glimpse in its depths what usually escapes me in the observation of reality” (Lipps 1905/1965, 412). The *as if* is maintained. The beholder is not at risk, and I would add, *can’t* act in response, at least to the situation under consideration. In an apparent paradox, rather than absolving the beholder of future action, this distance may allow the beholder to engage with questions of responsibility: What would I do were I in a similar situation, and able to act? Given all the mirroring power of empathy within our *étsem*, this *as if* allows the beholder to practice, to confront within themselves their likely reactions in a similar situation.

My struggle to find the right word for being grabbed is enlightening here. One member of my dissertation committee has suggested about this incident that one of the causes for my difficulty is that I

lack adequate empathy for myself in this situation, and should consider just accepting the constable's word. I was terrified, and I was injured. I couldn't scream at the time, and I haven't found the right words since. Why not accept the constable's word, his witness, that this was assault? I WAS assaulted; though he still WASN'T a street person. Acceptance of another's definition can only go so far.

I can't find my own words for traumas when they are still happening to me. Like my father-in-law, I need someone else to write the ethnographic story of an Incan child's sacrificial trauma, or the scientific story of traumatic memory, *as if* it were their own. Perhaps, I am tempted to think, if only Reinhard and Schacter could maintain an adequate *as if* they could write texts more prone to empathy. The *as if*, however, seems more likely to mediate empathy when only the experience of empathic suffering is at stake in response to someone else's physical or emotional pain. If the writers' fundamental views of the world, other humans, or themselves are at risk, the *as if* seems unlikely to offer much help. Still I can hope other more properly empathic presentations of trauma may wear away their resistance to changes even in those deep states of belief. If humans are prone to violence, structured sacrificial violence, we need anthropologists and scientific psychologists to bring their insights to bear upon these tendencies, to help remove everyone, the children and adults alike, from the matrix of that violence. Or perhaps we don't. Perhaps Steiner and Barthes are right and we primarily need re-mythification, such as George's poem which opens Case Study II and which was just such a re-mythification of that Case Study.

I do need to continue to write my own accounts of these events as well, but I need to write them *as if* they were someone else's. When I bring my own skills, my own set of standards for a given piece of writing, to bear upon incidents from my past, I treat them *as if* they were someone else's. Schacter wants the obvious bruises; I can't allow their absence to silence me. I can't allow my relative sanity to disqualify me from asserting the reality of sacrifice in my case.

I do not have the distance from my own material to turn it into fiction, and I don't want to in any case. My past is real, and what is threatened by any absolute disbelief in reality is that my life has not in any meaningful sense occurred. A similar problem occurs with any assumption of absolute alterity, namely that no judgment may be levelled against those who perpetrated those atrocities, nor against those

who perpetrate them today. In contrast, what I want to assert is that atrocities occur: Incan children are sacrificed to the Gods, soldiers are sacrificed to the geo-political desires of those above them, my childhood was sacrificed to achieve transcendent ends. These are meaningful descriptions which bear a strong relationship to the events they evoke, and those events can be judged as morally wrong. Far from believing that the nature of these events as sacrificial atrocities removes their perpetrators from our empathy, however, I believe their nature as acts of humans requires us to choose a mature, *as-if*-permeated, empathy in our approach.

This however is not a purely individual decision. After reading an early draft of this paper, Lynn Fels said, "I wish I had known what you were going through, so I could support you." "I couldn't," I said, "I just couldn't tell you." Which was accurate, but not precise enough. It wasn't that I thought about telling her and decided not to; rather, there was no decision to be made because I never thought about telling her at all. The bruises are not just invisible to others; I can't even see them in my own mirror. Some of my silences are so ingrained, that I don't even know they are there until someone else calls my attention to them. If I am to write, I must continue in communities where it is my silences which are questioned, and where those silences, for the alert empathic beholder, point not to the absence, but the presence, of the Real.

DIGRESSION: PRECEDENCE AND DOMINANCE

Help! My dissertation has been hijacked by trauma. Once focussed upon, the inexpressibility of trauma has demanded a great deal of expression. But by explicating in such detail empathy's multiple implications in the inexpressibility of trauma, I risk leaving empathy captured by the realm of emotional and physical pain. You'll remember, however, the rather extreme measures in the first sections of this thesis to provide a far broader definition of empathy, to construct it as a fundamental human capacity, prone, perhaps *more* prone, to positive than to negative moral outcomes. In order to ransom empathy, and return it to its proper wider sphere, this dissertation ends with an essay that reveals empathy as implicated, yes, in the beholder's responses to the pain of another, but also deeply concerned in fundamental physical mirroring and in the complexities of communication within a long loving relationship.

For a number of reasons, I do not intend to analyze the following essay further than within this digression. The notion of subjecting a given piece of writing to a critical examination suggests indeed subjection, a relation of dominance over the given text by the critical discourse. In choosing to give this essay the last word, I am hoping to grant it not just a reprieve from this subjection, but to make its broader affection for empathy the last word on this particular set of reflections.

I am thus making textual my belief that, should any such subjection be necessary, the proper direction is from the academic toward the more accessible, and with respect to this case study, from the discourse of the causal toward the discourses of the ethical and chosen. Were I writing in another context, I would not even include this digression. But I am writing an academic dissertation, and this is my nod toward the requirement to accommodate the language of that context.



HEARTS AND TONGUES

“Valentine’s Day is just sentimental,” says my twenty-five-year old son. “Father’s Day is too, and Mother’s Day was invented to sell cards. They’re all Hallmark holidays.” I must admit I share the sentiment, not of the cards, but of my son. Stamped into the bases of fine handmade vessels, Medieval hallmarks—with their evocation of guilds, of apprentices copying and re-copying the masterworks, of graven symbols denoting the purity of the silver and the professionalism of the job—have always seemed in marked, even hallmarked, contrast to the strictly amateur version of love found in most cards. Nevertheless, I like it when the children honour their father, who has listened and changed and worked hard at his parenting. And how can I not appreciate Mother’s Day, when teachers in elementary school force one’s children, well before the age when they would naturally incline that way, and regardless of one’s actual performance in the role, to act grateful for the very fact that one has donated an egg to their creation. My vanity laps it up; my need for affirmation adores it. For I am indeed a mother, and what better than these cards in return for other hallmarks embossing my abdomen, where the interstitial connections between my various layers of skin released their attachments in order to enfranchise these babies of mine.

But as a woman married now twenty-nine years, I must say that Valentine’s Day has always been a bit of a crisis for me. A few years ago, when we were celebrating our 25th anniversary, I was asked whether I still “loved Tom,” my husband. My answer was a somewhat suspicious, “Well, what do *you* mean by love... ?” which I am sure the asker interpreted as, “Actually, no.” What I should have said was, “If by love you mean what I think you mean, then the answer is—Yes, thank God—I still do, and not infrequently.” This would not have reassured her either, but would be closer to the truth, if she were talking about that quadruple mix of tenderness and lust, emotional neediness and infantile connection, which characterizes the early stages of loves and romances.

I wanted to say “infant-love,” not “infantile,” just now, as the more pertinent adjective, for I do not mean it as a criticism. I simply refer to my amazement when I sat rocking my first child and realized that what I felt for this baby was very like what I had felt in the early stages of all my romantic loves, and

even well into some of them. That recognition in turn sent me back into my very early memories, which were tinged with that same sense of response to the adults around me, a reaction so primal, so much a part of us from the beginning, that questions of maturity and development are beside the point, something eternally at our deepest core, which marks most those relationships most vital to us. So I am not demeaning even that infant love, and whenever that pre-verbal, pre-adult essence of connection first fuses with adult sexual desire, the incandescent power of the drive commands absolute respect.

I will confess that, at eighteen years of age, in the balcony of the tiny local theatre, a friend and I laughed so often during the screening of "Love Story" that the patrons below shushed us in annoyance. We were both, perhaps regrettably, already suspicious of the "never having to say you're sorry" definition of love. Yet I am not an unemotional nor perfectly unsentimental person. I seeped quite recently, if soundlessly, at a showing of *Ladies in Lavender*— not at the manipulatively romantic film-making but at Judy Dench's portrayal of a childlike woman who has never had a romantic love. And only last month at a parade I discovered bad high school band music makes the hairs stand up on the back of my neck and my heart pound with an unsound sense of martial emotion. I have even, on occasion, felt softly and tenderly enough to merit a curvy Valentine's heart, tucked into a frilly card, to convey it.

Yet love for me is resolutely not limited to the emotion of the heart-shaped holiday. For one thing, it is not merely an emotion at all, what I *feel* for Tom, for my children, for my friends. I can say "I love you" to these people, even say it frequently, because when I say it, I can mean, "Here, take this. I am offering a word to sum up all that we do, all that we risk, all that we *are* with each other."

My husband, on the other hand, very much likes traditional signs of affection; I could probably give *him* flowers, which he'd find it just *lovely*. He believes at depth in this love's Hallmark version. It must immediately be said that Tom hardly means so little by these signs as my summation might imply— after all he is still married to me and my bizarre gothic history. That is another story, whose only relevance is this: my awareness of my past deeply complicates my belief that others could encompass me in any version of their love.

Despite all of this, Tom remains a romantic, and married to someone who is, on a *good* day, agnostic. I can't stop convulsing at what most seem to mean by love. It's not that I think them incapable of deep love, nor that I think my love deeper than theirs, but that they seem to throw the word around, willy-nilly, and especially in the context of February 14th. Meanwhile, as if to spite my qualms, Valentine's Day just keeps rolling around. Every year at some point, Tom will say, "What do you want to do? Should we go out?" and I'll say, "I don't know, what do *you* want to do?" quite literally praying all the while, "God, help me! What is he asking *me* for?" and wondering, "If he's romantic, what am I? Empathetic?" Obviously, given my usual responses, not yet, for him, properly.

This year, as Heart Season—the piecework Frankenstein's monster of holidays—lurched toward me, I was in the middle of reading an article for my doctoral dissertation. After a number of short flings, computer science, Chinese history, I have had two great academic loves: literary translation and the study of empathy. Now, I am not opposed to definitions, and empathy certainly needs them. When I stop to parse it all out, to observe where I use the terms—empathy, empathetic, empathic—in my ongoing life, I am, at the one end, describing the deliberate experience of putting myself in another's shoes, of asking myself, "What would it be like to go through an event or series of events which have occurred for another human being?" I am reading about a cell phone found on a girl's body in a Sri Lankan lake after a tsunami, about the rescuers putting the SIM card into one of their own phones and calling someone who turns out to be the father. I am not Thai, my daughter is not missing, but I can choose to envision myself answering that phone call.

At the other conceptual end, I am often describing the sudden, unwilled intuition that I am experiencing another person's emotions—their sorrow or grief, their elation. A friend tells me about her promotion into a new position at work; I am suddenly feeling proud and satisfied, without any willed replication of her situation in my consciousness.

Scientists, responding to the growing body of information from brain scans, increasingly add to this list of two sorts of empathy a kind of mental imaging of the actions and expressions of others which occurs at the brain level, via the mirror neurons, without any conscious awareness. This unconscious em-

pathic mirroring can lead an attentive observer to adopt the facial expression of a person who is speaking, or lead a man who is looking at a picture in a gallery, business jacket across his arm, to unconsciously tilt into the insouciant posture of the cavalier in the painting.

In contrast, in an attempt to solve certain philosophical problems, the writers of the philosophical article I was reading as V-day approached wanted to define empathy as an act of communication, which might have been fine, except that they specifically eliminated mirroring and replication from the discussion—those aspects which in ordinary definition strike most of us as descriptive of our experience. Questioning common usage can be valuable; it can help to articulate or clarify what most of us mean. This article, however, struck me as a typically arid philosophical attempt to nail down a description at the expense of distancing itself from my own experience and from ordinary language. Then, much to my surprise, I found myself pondering this particularly distasteful article from another angle, wondering what it would mean to deliberately use empathy to communicate my love for Tom. In those terms, it dawned on me that what needed more work was my TSL, my *Tom-as-a-second-language*.

So, when Tom popped the V-question last February, I suggested we stay in, and tried to concoct a Tom-like experience. For dinners such as this, I normally undertake a complex gourmet menu; spending hours to make foods I know we'll both delight in. This time, I focussed on Tom's simple favourites, grilled fish, rice, and broccoli. For dessert, I dipped half of the strawberries in white chocolate—the dark kind disrupts his heart rhythms, literally. We dressed for dinner, tux and negligee, and there, for the sake of brevity and delicacy, I will say that in each of the details, I asked myself, "What does Tom like here; what says love to *him*?"

The next day, Tom commented on the evening, "That was such a thoughtful Valentine's." I heard his gratitude and was delighted, but his comment also alerted me to the way I had, without thinking about it, actually lapsed into a particularly comfortable conversion in making choices for that evening. I hadn't spoken *Tom* with fluency, the ease of familiar first language usage. These acts had not been marked with hallmarks, guild marks, signs of his alternative grammar of affection. Rather, I get enjoyment from thinking through gifts for those I love, so I had used that particular most-comfortable expres-

sion to render my love into his native tongue. The process was thought-full, but entailed speaking *Tom* with my own accent, and was more rendition than full translation.

A few years ago, when I was translating the work of a Mexican poet, I would work and rework the drafts, sounding them out in my head and aloud, before sending them to her. Invariably she would send them back with revisions that sounded horrid to my inner ear. I would read them out loud, and they were even worse. The first time this happened, the professor who was helping me said, "Oh, it's obvious. She's reading your English with a Spanish accent." Then he read her version, in English, but with a Mexican-Spanish inflection. Clearly any Mexican with a good English vocabulary and bad English pronunciation would have loved her versions of my translations. I do not believe I will ever speak flawless *Tom*; I'll likely never do better than good *Tom* vocabulary with very bad pronunciation. The clipped technicality of my emphasis and lack of romantic vowel sounds and rhythms will mark me as a tourist whenever I open my mouth.

Still, this was the first Valentine's Day when I had attempted to speak *Tom*, and the need to overcome my disdain challenged me even more than the work of translation. Overcoming disdain is a part of every relationship, though my own version takes on a nasty intellectual edge. I am prone to insist on my proper accent.

What was outside expectation was that stringing together an evening, inscribing a particular page of time with my translated paragraph of food, and silk, and sex, would lead to the rapid acquisition of a reading knowledge of *Tom*. His behaviour toward me lost opacity, and over the next days I was conscious of ways he expressed his love to me. He brought me pastries on Sunday morning, and on a day when the phone woke us early, the paper to me in bed. He asked me about my day as I cooked dinner in the kitchen. Indeed, I suddenly realized he was everywhere, attending to me, conjugating the verb forms.

Don't misunderstand me: I've been aware for a long time that *something* was being expressed by acts like these. What was different was the speed of process. When a child learns to read in their first language, there comes a point when they move from sounding out the words one by one to flow; they are suddenly carried along by the story, no longer conscious of the mechanics of words on a page. In a sec-

and language this happens too, when the newspaper article about the Spanish pop star's gigantic engagement ring is no longer an exercise in grammar and translation: the words on the page disappear and you hear their sounds, imagine the ring, the finger. Quite suddenly, even though the language was love with an overwhelming *Tom* accent, I no longer thought: "Oh, he likes having things brought to him, so when he does this for me he is expressing his love," but, in a full-bodied contact language of physical person-to-person empathy, something like "*croissant = love*"— or just "*love*."

Soon after that Valentine's Day, I experienced another more physical empathy. A few years ago, after injuries had made exercise difficult for me I began attending sessions twice a week at a "Pilates studio," thus-called because the form of exercise originated in work with dancers. After three years, my ability to do many activities has dramatically improved, but proficient at Pilates I am not. Instead, I have decided, I am more like Mr. Rogers.

When Fred Rogers (of *Mr. Rogers Neighbourhood*) died, a local columnist pointed out that he had made a career of never being expert. He would invite a famous ballet dancer, have him execute a few steps, beautifully of course, and then try them himself, his comfy slippers and cardigan flopping all over the place, the eternal amateur. He danced, then, not to become a master of the guild, but for the love of thing—the very definition of an *amat-eur*—one who acts and learns out of love.

On any given day I am likely to have an annoyingly adept ballet dancer on my left. Even more annoying will be the person on my right, who will hear from the trainer, "Engage your *vastus lateralis* and it will release your hamstring" or whatever damn thing it is. The next thing I always hear the trainer say is, "That's great! See! Now you can feel it, right?" To which the person always responds, annoyingly, "Yeah, I get it, this is GREAT!" My *vastus* is indeed *lateralis*, or vice versa, perhaps, but in my case the conversation runs, "Relax the thingamajiggy and your whatsit will slide around." Upon translation, the thingamajiggy has to do with, say, my upper shoulders, and the whatsit is my shoulder blade, but I am usually completely unable to translate the physiological talk into reaction.

Recently, as I exercised in front of a mirror at the studio, lifting an outstretched towel between my hands, a trainer, came over to assist. Kit placed her hands on the top of my shoulders, and while they were there I did indeed relax them. Then she placed her hands over my shoulder blades and encouraged them to slide, and slide they did. Then she took her hands away and thingamajiggy and whatsit ceased to communicate. I could not in any way feel what I needed to feel.

Finally, Kit came around in front of me, turned her back to me, and said, "Watch." She picked up a towel and lifted her outstretched arms. Through her shirt, I could see her shoulder blades moving across her back. "Try it," she said, and I could do it, simple as that. Now a number of things about this are quite odd: I still couldn't exactly *feel* what my shoulder blades were doing, but I *knew* that they were mimicking Kit's way of moving. Further, I could not in the mirror see what I needed to see about my back—at least not without a second mirror. I have never deliberately looked at my shoulder blades while I was lifting a towel: not directly, not in a mirror, and particularly not when exercising—so I had no internal vision of my own shoulder blades to connect to this vision of hers.

I have read multiple studies on the neurons in the brain that reproduce the action of another observed body: When I attend to someone else's arm, the part of my brain map corresponding to my own arm becomes very active. My mind will translate the image of Kit's shoulder blades into an image and then action of my own. Without my prior years of this exercise, this particular event might not have happened. Still, it seemed miraculous: When I focussed on Kit's back, the shoulder blade connections in my brain adjusted to light up in the right way, to tell which of the many muscles to relax and which to move.

This mimicry, this mirroring, turns out to be, at least in an evolutionary sense, deep and old. The particular neurons which enable this replication, called the "mirror" neurons, are located in the temporal region of the brain. They were first identified in short-tailed Old World monkeys called macaques. All the evidence is that we share a group of brain structures and functions with the other primates. This could be funny, in whatever way ape-jokes are, or disturbing to one's sense of human uniqueness. For me, instead, it locates the mirroring, this physical essence of empathy, like the infant version of love, deep in the

most basic centers of my being. My first response to others is a pre-verbal response to their bodies, and I embody that pre-verbal response in the mirrored play in the wet-ware of my mind.

Physical mirroring also played a part in another event from around that time. During spring break at her university, my daughter Anna had surgery on her ankle to neaten up damage from a very bad sprain. As she lay on our couch, she was recovering rapidly, needing little pain medication. Then on the third day, as I worked in my office next to the living room, I heard, "Mom, can you come in here?" In short order she was literally writhing in extreme pain. The foot on the injury side was engorged, bright red, and burning to the touch. She had gone on crutches to the bathroom, and the pain started soon after. She was diagnosed a few days later with an odd neuro-vascular reaction known to be acutely painful. She spent a couple of days on massive doses of pain killers and vein-relaxant, then rapidly recovered.

But that day, as I sat by my daughter, I had to decide whether to immediately call her doctor when I didn't believe she was at fundamental risk and didn't want to leave her alone, and especially whether, or how, to respond to my own extreme need to DO SOMETHING, DO ANYTHING! in reaction to her excruciating pain. This reaction is triggered by being a parent, entering into that fierce state of mirrored tenderness to my child's suffering. But I have also had a particular difficulty with this child. I carry memories of slights done to her: the loss of the bell she was to ring in the Christmas concert, her grief after a boy ran into her when she was carrying a flower pot she had decorated. I remember instances like this with my two boys as well, but they lack the intensity. Perhaps the source of this intensity is shared gender, or some aspect of our lives together, of her personality or mine. Whatever the source, the shared mirroring of helplessness with her is acute, the drive to intervene more severe.

As I sat by her, holding her hand, touching her shoulder, observing, hearing, smelling Anna's pain, pieces of information popped into my mind, pictures first and words only later: a bright red foot lighting up my own brain like a Christmas tree, my way of remembering the brain scan studies of physical mirroring. Without a doubt, I had my daughter's foot on my mind. I remembered a study which enlisted couples. While the other watched, one member of the couple received a moderate level of burning pain

on the arm. Both brains behaved alike in major ways, with arm and emotion areas becoming very active, though the pain area was active only for the one given the stimulus. Finally a really useful piece of related information came into the fore part of my consciousness. You can sense the hurt of the other, Carl Rogers taught psychotherapists, even sense the causes of the hurt, but you must never lose sight of the fact the hurt is not happening to you, but rather *as if* it were. If the *as if* is lost, what happens is not empathy, but "identification" and you may become lost in that other identity.

Bits and pieces of reading intruded upon me, switching from primary pictures to Carl Rogers more psychoanalytic language, as my subconscious attempted to communicate helpful perspectives during the full hour it took for Anna's pain to subside. In the end, I sat there. I seeped a bit and silently held my daughter's hand. Thoughts I had inadvertently retrieved from the academic file helped calm me. When Anna couldn't breathe deeply, I did. I meditated on what it meant to be a witness there. I knew it was *as if* and kept it so.

The next day Anna told me how glad she had been that I was there, and remarked on my reactions. "You were with me," she said, "and I knew you cared. But somehow the way you reacted, even when I was in such pain, let me know I was going to be all right. It was such a help that you didn't get more upset." I had not gotten lost in her pain, and with her own awareness, her own mirroring, my daughter had reproduced something of my deeper level of calm, even in the midst of her pain.

Decisions we make in parenting may lead to good or bad outcomes, but almost never deliver precisely what we intend, so Anna's comments were a very pleasant surprise, one I need to remember. There is a longer term issue. As a young adult, in her life in general, Anna needs to experience her own pain, needs me to maintain the *as if*. And when I do, at least some of the time, she may also absorb, even when she is distressed, some of my deeper calm, my sense that she will be fine.

While the languages of translation and of academic discussion appear in the end inadequate to any fluent expression of my daily life, and the language of my daily life inadequate to them, it becomes clear I have taken more than a few academic readings, even unappetizing ones, not only into my mind but

to heart. These have begun to inflect not just the work I place upon the dissertation page, but my wider life. Of course this may be saying I resemble my Sheltie dog, Patrick, who will eat anything, and having eaten, process it into a bizarre combination of frantic activity, stored fat, and poop—he runs in circles barking pointlessly a lot. The absorption of academic matter is unexpected; what appeared to be mutually indigestible languages now interplay.

Whether viewed academically or purely personally all aspects of empathy were at play in my experience with my daughter. My emotional mirroring was at first dependent on both my deeper, pre-verbal, embodied replication of aspects of her state. Yet symbols, and language, and significant conscious cerebral response enter here, too. While I reflected my daughter's pain in the neurons of my brain, and the modifying notions and learning in my mind, the whole resides somewhere else. I can only think of the somewhere as my heart, but that organ for me can hardly be the Hallmark Valentine's heart.

Tom's acts of love were not remarkable for their extravagance or uniqueness; they were ordinary and usual. My attempt to accept Valentine's Day, to absorb and transcend its version of love, acted as a rapid immersion in that everyday language, the first language, of the man I do in fact love. The intensity of that awareness has faded somewhat since, but I have remained aware that I am, far more often than I consciously realized before that Valentine's Day, in his thoughts, in his mind, mirrored. I think Tom would claim that he carries me in his heart.

But this heart, too, is not the Valentine's heart. Even if Valentine's Day isn't an entirely false reflection of love, the neat, rounded, sumptuous icon, shaped as it is like a ripe and edible fruit, bears only the faintest contours of the four-chambered original, fleshly and fibrous and full of blood. The Valentine's heart is perfectly appropriate to the Hallmark version of love but it is not the heart which could contain a fully loving life with any flesh and blood person, let alone with someone like me.

I need to dwell in a quite different sort of heart and another language which I will never speak well has a better signifier of the organ. The Hebrew heart, *levav*, is not just where emotions live. It is rather the hidden seat of our lives, the source of our choices and behaviours, including all that we do, all

that we speak. Valentine's Day, of all things, taught me a new way to see that I live not in Tom's Valentine heart but in his *levav*.

I'll never be expert at sentimental love; even if I have the grammar, the vocabulary, down cold, it will always sound best to those with very bad accents. Those who listen will have to work to hear beauty in my inflected approach. I will never speak *Tom*, nor *Anna*, nor *Patrick*, nor Spanish or Hebrew for that matter, fluently. Perhaps, since I am not just unable, but unwilling, to speak like a native, I am not, strictly speaking, even a perpetual apprentice when it comes to love, but rather an eternal amat-*eur*. Still, I had better keep practicing, given that my unhallmarked and amateur efforts have so far yielded such surprising results, revealing to me languages of love and shapes of heart in which I already dwell.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Carl Rogers' Expanded Definition of Empathy

In 1975, Carl Rogers broke a silence of several years on the topic of empathy in an article entitled, "Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being." Below please find his expanded definition of empathy, included here as the best single definition of empathy from the literature I have read.

With this conceptual background, let me attempt a description of empathy which would seem satisfactory to me today. I would no longer be terming it a "state of empathy," because I believe it to be a process, rather than a state. Perhaps I can capture that quality.

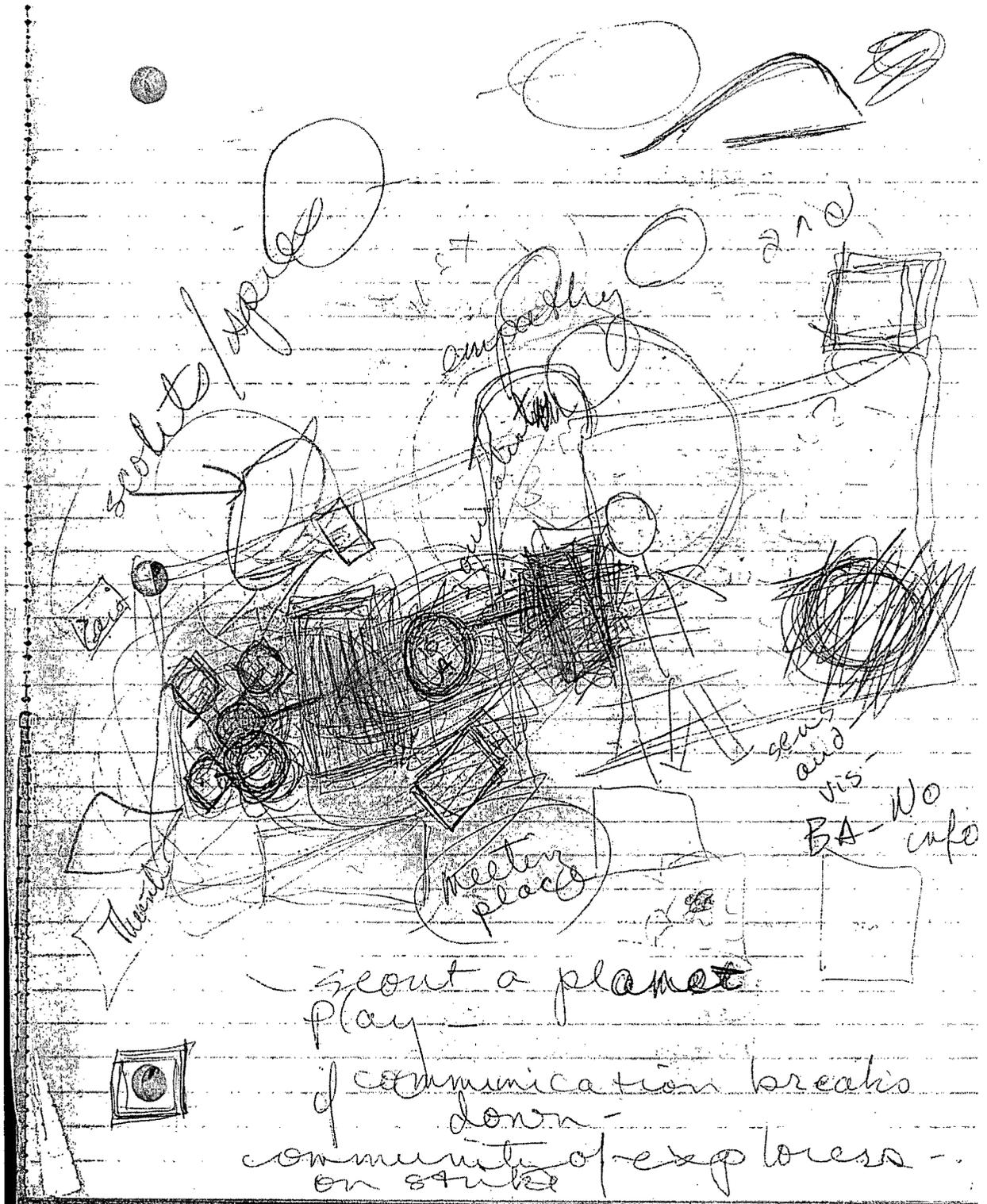
The way of being with another person which is termed empathic has several facets. It means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in his/her life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments, sensing meanings of which he/she is scarcely aware, but not trying to uncover feelings of which the person is totally unaware, since this would be to threatening. It includes communicating your sensings of his/her world as you look with fresh and un-frightened eyes at elements of which the individual is fearful. It means frequently checking with him/her as to the accuracy of your sensings, and being guided by the responses you receive. You are a confident companion to the person in his/her inner world. By pointing to the possible meanings in the flow of his/her experiencing you help the person to focus on this useful type of referent, to experience the meanings more fully, and to move forward in the experiencing.

To be with another in this way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another's world without prejudice. In some sense it means that you lay aside your self and this can only be done by a person who is secure enough in himself that he knows he will not get lost in what may turn out to be the strange or bizarre world of the other and can comfortably return to his own world when he wishes.

Perhaps this description makes clear that being empathic is a complex, demanding, strong yet subtle and gentle way of being. (Rogers 1975, 3-4)

Appendix B: A Selection of Role Drama Documents

Sketch from last meeting with Lynn Fels (Cooper 2003):



Characters for Mars Trauma Drama:

Role	Position on Space Station	Rough brain correlate	Actor
Alien		[Cause of traumatic incident]	Lynn
Cordelia	Head Officer	Pre-frontal Cortex/ conscious control	Karen
Hippolyte	Information organization officer	Hippocampus	Lindsay
Amelia	Data Importance Officer	Amygdala	Dorissa
Broca	Acting Broadcaster/ Backup Data Collections Officer	Broca's Area/ Sensory Brain Area	Sean
Audrey	Auditory Data Officer	Auditory Cortex	Jenn
Vic	Visual Data Officer	Visual Cortex	Leslie
Thallea	General Data Officer/ Backup Broadcaster	Thalamus/ Broca's Area	Pauleen
Gus	Crew Cook	Taste-related brain area	Lynn
Tad	Surfaces Information Officer	Tactile Hand "Map"	Leslie
Proprea	General Data Collection Officer	Proprioception	Jennifer
Sonny	General Data Collection Officer	Somatic perception	(any visitors)

To do prior to beginning of drama:

Brief Lynn as alien:

 Show her where food is.

 Dress her in costume (sheet, coloured sock for sensory appendage, air horn).

Set up broadcast booth so that broadcaster cannot see the door.

Tape green square to wall.

Put tape on floor.

Leave timer in broadcast booth.

Hide napkins and straws in room.

Hide food under table cloth in separate room.

Put whistle and "voltage generator" in pocket.

Organize costumes and other props—esp. costume for Amelia.

Cordelia/Head Officer's Instructions

Pre-role:

Good afternoon. I am Cordelia, your head officer. This room represents the planet Mars. We will be doing a role play, and some of the roles have quite detailed instructions.

This will be a bit like the image theatre we participated in several weeks ago, where the organizers performed a drama for us, then asked for interventions.

In our case, each of you will be given a detailed role once you are in the drama. There is plenty of room for creative interaction, but for this first section please do stay within the role as described.

After this first section of drama, which will be reasonably long, a chance for intervention in the drama will be described, and you will be able to make changes to any of the roles you have played or seen.

We'll use the "lights on"/"lights out" format for framing the drama. When I say "lights out" please close your eyes. When I say "lights on", please open them.

We will start this section of the drama with "lights out". When "lights on" occurs, we'll be in the drama. Your roles will be assigned to you within the drama.

This first section of the drama will be over at "lights out", and then the intervention will begin.

EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS BETWEEN LIGHTS ON AND LIGHTS OUT IS PART OF THE DRAMA.

!!LIGHTS OUT!!

!!LIGHTS ON!!

Head Officer:

Welcome to the Mars exploration station. I am your head officer. I am so pleased that each of you has volunteered for this vital mission. While I know each of you is competent at your individual duties, there are a few very important pieces of information.

Station Layout: This is the main station, the planet is over there. The media booth is out the tunnel and through the first air-lock on your left.

Duty/Off duty: We use whistles to indicate on and off-duty times. A single whistle indicates that the crew is on duty. A double whistle indicates that the crew is off-duty.

When off-duty, you may do whatever you please, except leaving the planet.

Please be sure to wear your name tags at all times. In the event of an emergency, we must be able to find everyone.

Communication: The single most important issue for this station is communication. Hence, many of your orders and instructions relate to communication issues. Please remember that you are in a very unfamiliar situation, and that some new crew members experience very significant frustration in trying to carry out their roles within the station.

Information collection and transfer is our most important task. Therefore there are certain very clear instructions for communication. It is VERY IMPORTANT that you follow these instructions. Our survival may depend upon it.

LOSING CONTACT with the earth is potentially fatal. Therefore, our first important task is to pick a primary and backup broadcast officer. May I have two volunteers? Excellent. Thank you BROCA, THALLEA.

You should know that not only will you be broadcast live, but there will be a re-broadcast later this evening which we can all see!

BROCA, could you please go to the broadcast booth. Your instructions are on the chair where you need to sit in order to make the broadcast. You must be within the area of the floor marked out by tape, and you must be facing the clear green square on the wall, in order for the broadcast to work. Please go there, read all of your instructions, and begin preparing your first broadcast according to your instructions.

[BROCA leaves]

THALLEA, you are the backup broadcaster. Your packet includes both primary and backup instructions. Please be sure you are familiar with both.

VERY IMPORTANT: No one may enter the media booth unless their instructions expressly tell them to! You can imagine what chaos could arise if everyone tried to broadcast at once.

As you know, the primary goal of this mission is to find a continuing source of high quality food and drink for the earth, which is becoming so overburdened that we are running short of both.

Aliens: What you have not been told until now is that an alien life-form has been detected on this planet. These aliens do not seem to be aggressive, but they are easily frightened.

Should an alien appear, the most important thing is to try to establish respectful contact for the purpose of locating a dependable source of food and drink.

There is some danger. Contact with aliens is disabling. People fall to the ground and freeze when touched by them. But the contact is not fatal. I have the antidote, which is a voltage administered by this voltage generator.

Several of you have specific responsibilities in the event an alien should make contact. Whatever happens during alien contact, please execute your POST-ALIEN duties as rapidly as possible once the alien has left.

May I have a volunteer for the job of information coordinator in the event of alien contact?

Thank you HIPPOLYTE. May we call you HIPPO for short?

[Hand HIPPO instructions]

Now, I will hand out the instructions to the remainder of you. When I call out your name, please raise your hand.

[Hand out remainder of roles, starting with AMELIA]

For all our sakes, we will first read our orders, and then conduct a test run of on-duty procedures. Please read through your orders and come to me with any questions.

[Give time to read orders]

One final note. Emergencies can only be signalled by our importance officer, AMELIA. In a real exploration, you will know we are in a state of emergency if she has on a red shawl and cap.

Now we will engage in a test run of on duty procedures. This simulation will be quite short so please pay attention to my directions.

The simulation is now on.

[One whistle]

Please begin your on-duty explorations.
Please assume your POST-ALIEN stations.
Please undertake emergency I procedures.
Please undertake emergency II procedures.

[Two whistles]

Thank you. Excellent. Please come to me one at a time with any questions you may have.

Thank you very much. I will now check on BROCA. On-duty time begins in a few minutes, at which point please begin your exploration of the planet. Please relax and enjoy yourselves while you listen for the whistle.

[Leave room. Give BROCA instructions. If touched by sock, then frozen and disabled until touched by voltage generator.]

Event I—Traumatic.

[One Whistle]

[Allow time for exploration]

Alien:

[Come in. Act friendly.]
[Hand basket to someone]
[Disable Sonny, Proprea, or Tad, Vic, or Gus]
[Blow horn and run]
[Disable BROCA, perhaps as officer]

Head Officer:

[Reappear and make sure everyone is following their instructions to get the info out.]

[Allow for broadcast]

[Two Whistles]

[One Whistle]

Head Officer:

Please convene here. I know this was a frightening event for all of you. All in all you performed exceptionally well. We nearly lost contact with the earth, however, and you all know what that means. However, no harm done, none at all. The mission however is not yet complete so we will return to duty within a few minutes.

BROCA has been badly shaken by this experience. THALLEA, will you please relieve BROCA, and begin preparing the next broadcast. And BROCA will assume THALLY'S role as general data collection officer. Please insure you understand the instructions for your current job.

Please enjoy a few off-duty minutes. We will shortly return to duty.

[Two whistles]

Event II—Non-Traumatic.

[Allow conversation]

[One Whistle]

[Allow time for exploration]

Alien:

Appear with food and drink. Engage crew.

Leave calmly.

Head Officer:

[Re-appear]

Crew, crew—we have perhaps 10 minutes to prepare something for broadcast. Please follow your POST-ALIEN contact instructions.

[Allow for second broadcast, helping if necessary.]

[Two Whistles]

[One Whistle]

Head Officer:

Please convene here. Well done officers, well done! Oh, its time for the rebroadcast! Let's go into the media booth to see it.

BROCA, AMELIA, and AUDREY, may I see you for a moment.

O.K. We'll rerun the broadcast from the time of the first alien incursion.

[Run first broadcast]

Oh dear! Let's see what the second broadcast looks like!

Thallea—Please rerun the second broadcast as you gave it after HIPPO interrupted.

[Run second broadcast]

!!LIGHTS OFF!!

INTERVENTION:

Can sub in for any player and change the way the drama works, or can direct changes and have any set of players run through a part of the drama.

BREAK

Debrief.

Hand out diagram and explain brain basis for simulations, role of each part.

Debrief.

End

HIPPOLYTE:

You are the information organization officer. Your job is to collect and organize the presentation of information to BROCA for broadcast should an alien appear.

IMPORTANT: IF TOUCHED BY AN ALIEN, YOU WILL BE FROZEN AND DISABLED. NONETHELESS PLEASE ATTEMPT TO BEFREIND ANY ALIENS WHO MAY APPEAR. THIS IS A MATTER OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE.

A. You may speak with anyone at any time, except BROCA. You must not address BROCA unless you are carrying out POST-ALIEN duties.

URGENT INFORMATION: If *at any time* Amelia is wearing a red cap or a red shawl, you must immediately sit down and become COMPLETELY unresponsive.

B. POST-ALIEN DUTIES:

Your duty is to organize the information from the data collection officers. They have instructions to come to you immediately after an alien contact.

Meet immediately with the other data officers in an area away from the media booth, to discuss how to present your information to the current broadcaster.

You will be the only one to speak to the broadcaster, and you may only use the following words:

“IMPORTANCE”, “HEARD”, “SAW”, “TASTED”, “TOUCHED”

You must USE NO OTHER WORDS IN COMMUNICATING WITH THE BROADCASTER.

You may organize any or all of the other officers to present their information to the broadcaster non-verbally. You will have about 10 minutes to organize, then you and the officers will present your information to the broadcaster.

It is the Broadcaster’s job to create a story from the information you will present to him or her.

Once you have presented the information, please leave the media booth with the other officers and return to the main station.

Emergency Plan I: This is the contingency plan should you be disabled. Do nothing.

Emergency Plan II: Prepare yourself to abandon the planet.

AMELIA

A. You are the data importance officer. Your responsibility is to establish and communicate the importance of information to be broadcast.

IMPORTANT: IF TOUCHED BY AN ALIEN, YOU WILL BE FROZEN AND DISABLED. NONETHELESS PLEASE ATTEMPT TO BEFREIND ANY ALIENS WHO MAY APPEAR. THIS IS A MATTER OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE.

When ON DUTY, you MUST NOT use words in any form (spoken, written or otherwise), nor may you use any other symbolic communication (such as nodding, pointing or shaking your head). Otherwise, you may communicate the importance of events by any means you wish, including vocal and physical expressions.

The ONLY exception is that you may speak with the data organization officer (HIPPOLYTE) in the event an alien has appeared.

URGENT INFORMATION: If *at any time* an alien disables a crew member, immediately put on the red cap and read shawl. Then carry on with your duties.

B. POST-ALIEN DUTIES:

You must immediately FIND THE DATA ORGANIZATION OFFICER (HIPPOLYTE) to prepare for a broadcast.

Emergency plans:

I. Put on the red cap and shawl. Should HIPPOLYTE be unresponsive, spend two minutes trying to get a response, then find AUDREY and run directly to the media booth. Regardless of what AUDREY does in the booth, communicate your importance information directly to BROCA, immediately. Then quickly leave. Please remember that you must use NO WORDS in any form, nor any other symbolic communication (such as nodding, pointing or shaking your head).

II. Put on the red cap and shawl. Go directly to the media booth. Should BROCA be disabled, please communicate your importance information immediately, regardless of what AUDREY is doing, directly to the broadcast screen. Please remember that you must use NO WORDS in any form, nor any other symbolic communication (such as nodding, pointing or shaking your head).

PLEASE REMEMBER, ONLY YOU CAN COMMUNICATE THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT IS HAPPENING.

You may then prepare to leave the planet.

BROCA or (backup THALLEA):

You are our acting broadcast officer and backup general data collections officer. Please review both sets of instructions.

As broadcaster, you are responsible for the ongoing live broadcast. It is your job to put words to the experience of the station officers, so that we can maintain meaningful contact with Earth.

Please begin broadcasting when the "on-duty" whistle sounds, and broadcast until the off-duty whistle sounds, unless, of course, you have been disabled. The people on earth want to hear from us about:

Weather.

Meals.

Sports and recreation.

Traffic (Just kidding!)

Our everyday life on the planet.

Whatever has struck you personally about your time on Mars.

Please broadcast continuously when on duty, unless interrupted by one of the crew.

You may receive information in verbal or non-verbal form—it is of vital importance that YOU TAKE WHATEVER INFORMATION YOU RECEIVE AND CONVERT IT INTO AN INTELLIGIBLE BROADCAST as quickly as possible after receiving the information.

URGENT INFORMATION:

WHILE ON DUTY DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES CEASE BROADCASTING FOR MORE THAN THREE MINUTES (unless you are disabled).

DO NOT LEAVE THE MEDIA BOOTH FOR ANY REASON UNLESS RELIEVED BY THE HEAD OFFICER, OR BY YOUR BACKUP.

Emergency plan:

I. Please keep broadcasting, as directed above.

II. You are disabled and a contingency plan has been instituted. Do nothing.

AUDREY.

You are the auditory data officer. Your responsibility is to collect and relate auditory data.

IMPORTANT: IF TOUCHED BY AN ALIEN, YOU WILL BE FROZEN AND DISABLED. NONETHELESS PLEASE ATTEMPT TO BEFREIND ANY ALIENS WHO MAY APPEAR. THIS IS A MATTER OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE.

A. When ON DUTY, you may only communicate by auditory means. You MUST NOT use words in any form, spoken, written or otherwise. You may mimic the sounds you have heard, but you must represent your auditory information ONLY in the form of sound.

The one exception is that you may speak with the data organization officer (HIPPOLYTE) in the event an alien has appeared.

B. POST-ALIEN DUTIES:

You must immediately FIND THE DATA ORGANIZATION OFFICER (HIPPOLYTE) to prepare for a broadcast.

Emergency plans:

I. Should HIPPOLYTE be un-responsive, spend 2 minutes trying to gain a response. Then find AMELIA and RUN directly to the media booth, and communicate your auditory information IMMEDIATELY and directly to BROCA, regardless of what AMELIA is doing. Then quickly return to the main station. Please remember that you must use NO WORDS in any form, nor any other symbolic communication (such as nodding, pointing or shaking your head) and may only communicate via sound.

II. Should BROCA be disabled, please communicate your auditory information as quickly as possible directly to the green broadcast square, regardless of what AMELIA is doing. Please remember that you must use NO WORDS in any form, nor any other symbolic communication (such as nodding, pointing or shaking your head) and may only communicate via sound.

You may then prepare to leave the planet.

VIC:

You are the VISUAL data officer. Your responsibility is to collect and relate VISUAL INFORMATION.

IMPORTANT: IF TOUCHED BY AN ALIEN, YOU WILL BE FROZEN AND DISABLED. NONETHELESS PLEASE ATTEMPT TO BEFREIND ANY ALIENS WHO MAY APPEAR. THIS IS A MATTER OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE.

A. When ON DUTY, you may only communicate by VISUAL means. You MUST NOT use words in any form, spoken, written or otherwise. You may mimic or otherwise represent what you have SEEN, but you must represent your auditory information ONLY in VISUAL form.

The one exception is that you may speak with the data organization officer (HIPPOLYTE) in the event an alien has appeared.

B. POST-ALIEN DUTIES:

You must immediately FIND THE DATA ORGANIZATION OFFICER (HIPPOLYTE) to prepare for a broadcast.

Emergency plans I and II: Prepare yourself to abandon the planet.

SONNY:

You are an acting general data collection officer.

IMPORTANT: IF TOUCHED BY AN ALIEN, YOU WILL BE FROZEN AND DISABLED. NONETHE-
LESS PLEASE ATTEMPT TO BEFREIND ANY ALIENS WHO MAY APPEAR. THIS IS A MATTER OF
CRITICAL IMPORTANCE.

A. You may collect any information about the planet you wish.

B. POST ALIEN DUTIES:

You must immediately FIND THE DATA ORGANIZATION OFFICER (HIPPOLYTE) to prepare for a
broadcast.

Emergency plans I and II: Prepare yourself to abandon the planet.