

INTERPRETING THE PERSONAL

EXPRESSION AND THE
FORMATION OF
FEELINGS



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Bersani and Browning share an interest in what expressions of "queer" desire might mean, a sense of the social value of raising these questions, and an understanding of the importance of helping develop a community where the meaning of gay sexual expression can find articulation. However, their interpretations of the same sorts of expressive practices do not always agree, and any interpretation remains highly contestable by the participants of these practices.

As an oppositional subculture, the gay urban "culture of desire" has arisen gradually and without affective categories that are already articulated. Bersani and Browning take on a project of articulation, and their interpretations remain both adoptable and contestable by the individuals who engage in the sexual practices they find diversely expressive. The affective meanings that interest these authors are developed through expressive and interpretive practices within and outside the gay urban community and are a matter of speculation, debate, disagreement, self-reflection, and political strategizing. It is these kind of processes that we need to understand in discussing the importance of many outlaw emotions and to place the role of interpretive communities in a theory of affect. We will understand these processes only if our theory of affective meaning does not already assume that these communities are in place and controlling the meanings that are reflective of their values.

Jaggar's appeal to the notion of culture to explain the possibility of meaning is a consequence of the social constructivism she cautiously endorses. This is the space of possibility that social constructivism, as a theory of meaning and interpretation, seems to offer to her for the establishment of new meanings. I believe Jaggar's use of this apparatus is antithetical in spirit to her idea of outlaw emotions. I prefer the possibilities of Davidson's account of interpretation: "it takes two to triangulate. Two, or, of course, more" (Davidson, "Three Varieties of Knowledge" 160). I would add, and sometimes only two.

I wish to reemphasize the main point of this chapter. We do not need another account of meaning called "social meaning" to understand the formation of affective significance. We need to understand, in much greater detail, the power people already can exercise over what we mean on any occasion by their willingness or ability to interpret us on those occasions. A theory of meaning that depends on conventional categories grounding the determination of meaning will have its force on particular occasions of interpretation by limiting how we can be understood.

VI

BEING DISMISSED

The Politics of Emotional Expression

It was my experience that when confronted with a feminist complaint that I did not agree with (typically because I did not understand it) I attempted to disprove the validity of the complaint. . . . I would contend that offense required two conditions: one being an event of potential offense and the other being a sensitivity to the event. This, in fact, seems to be true. My argument was made faulty, however, through a belief that women (especially feminists) were drastically oversensitive.

—Student, from an exam answer



In this study, I have offered the thesis that the category of feelings has a unique role in a comprehensive theory of psychological explanation: that the expression of feelings through a diverse range of nonlinguistic and linguistic resources is the attempted communication of personal significance. To develop a model for affective meaning, I have moved attention away from the most readily named of feelings—the classic emotions—toward feelings that are more personal, local, inchoate, or even idiosyncratic. I have argued that what we feel can be individuated through expression to sympathetic interpreters and can be distorted or constricted in interpretive communities that are unsympathetic. The necessary public nature to expression gives others ways of controlling our affective lives.

I have developed the theory partly through a critical hermeneutics of philosophical and feminist work on the emotions. Traditional philosophical attention to emotions as a small group of highly conceptualized feelings that might seem to find expression in easily identifiable patterns of behavior has obscured the importance of expression in the formation of our complex and nuanced emotional lives. Significantly, theorists, in neglecting expression, also have neglected the role of interpretation in the formation of affective meaning and have failed to account for the many ways in which individuals and groups are emotionally manipulated through the unsympathetic or hostile interpretive practices of others. Feminist theorists have been particularly sensitive to the political manipulation of the

emotions and have been attracted to social constructivism as an account of affective meaning where social response plays a dominant role in constituting the personal. In Chapter 5, I expressed the concern that a theoretical commitment to the social construction of emotion, with its emphasis on conventional emotion categories, supports restrictive and ethically problematic interpretive practices. I argued that interpreting others within the narrow range of categories set by emotion types will restrict the range of affective significance that can be determined, and thus, restrict the significance to people of their own lives.

The intent of this final chapter is to scrutinize further our interpretive practices by bringing a key group of critical terms associated with the expressive failure—bitterness, sentimentality, and emotionality—to greater attention. Although any of the three terms in which I have an interest can characterize a single expressive act, they are more often used as trait words that to characterize emoters on the basis of how we express ourselves, and they often characterize us in ways that imply that we need no longer be taken seriously.

In Chapter 2, I referred to bitterness, sentimentality, and emotionality as “diseases of the affections.” There I made the case that expressive criticisms such as sentimentality are at the same time criticisms of the feelings expressed. They suggest that on the basis of the way someone expresses her feelings, her emotional nature is unhealthy and not, for instance, that she’s simply acted or overreacted in inappropriate ways on some occasions. I am interested now in how these criticisms also are strategies of interpretive dismissal. Affective significance, for many individuals and groups, is only tentatively constituted and can easily be undermined. Perhaps sometimes an individual deserves the disregard that comes with being characterized as bitter or sentimental; my concern, however, is in isolating the strategic political use of these terms.

I choose the term “being dismissed” to capture the nuance of being told to leave the room before a conversation starts or being treated like a piece of furniture while it is going on. I shall regard being dismissed as when what we do or say, as assessed by what we would have described as our intentions in that situation, is either not taken seriously or not regarded at all in the context in which it is meant to have its effect. This definition is a counterfactual roughing-in of a kind of situation where the power of interpreters to help determine the situation may render our intentions unrecoverable and opaque. Put more simply, if no one takes my anger seriously by making any attempt to account for his or her behavior or to change it, but, instead, characterizes me as upset and oversensitive, I may be unsure, in retrospect, of how best to describe my behavior. I am interested in a particularly duplicitous kind of dismissal that does not

dismiss women and others for having emotions, but characterizes our emotional lives as unhealthy, attempting to limit our ways of acting in the world, and, consequently, our effects on the world.

The analysis of bitterness, sentimentality, and emotionality that follows has evident continuity with the feminist work described in Chapter 5. However, it focuses much more strongly on the concept of expression. In the final section of this chapter, I return to the problem of concealment.

BITTERNESS AND THE POLITICS OF EXPRESSION

The accusation of bitterness implicitly acknowledges that a great many people have never been granted the social goods likely to lead to the luxury of cultivating sympathetic emotional lives. Bitterness does not always involve gender as a salient determinant of who is most likely to be accused. The angry disadvantaged of a society—visible minorities, aboriginals, the working class, the disabled, the ill, the divorced, and the old—are all targets of this critique. I wish to discuss bitterness to focus the role of uptake in affective experience and the relation of uptake to accountability for expressive failure. I use as counterpoint Audre Lorde’s speeches on anger and Lynne McFall’s “What’s Wrong with Bitterness?” a so far lonely contribution to this particular diagnosis of emotional ill health.

McFall initially defines bitterness as “a refusal to forgive and forget. It is to maintain a vivid sense of the wrongs one has been done, to recite one’s angry litany of loss long past the time others may care to listen or sympathize. ‘You’re so bitter’ is condemnation, never praise . . . designed to silence the sufferer” (McFall, 146). In “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism” and “Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger,” Audre Lorde does not mention bitterness. She does, however, recite a litany of angers fueled by racist incidents neither forgotten nor forgiven. She speaks of “a symphony of anger” (“The Uses of Anger,” 129), “a molten pond,” and “net of rage” (“Eye to Eye,” 145), the weight of her anger, her fear of it, her “sisters of Color who . . . tremble their rage under harness” (“The Uses of Anger,” 127), the energy of her anger, her use of it, and the reasons for it: “Something’s going on here I do not understand, but I will never forget it. Her eyes. The flared nostrils. The hate” (“Eye to Eye,” 148). “I will never forget” is a commitment, a declaration of intent, and sometimes a threat—never simply a prediction.

Is Lorde angry or bitter? What makes the difference? Who has the authority to make the designation? And what might their motives be? I shall assume, for this discussion, that an expression categorized as bitterness

begins its life at some point as intended anger, and I limit my analysis to expressions such as Lorde's where it is anger, and not some other feeling, that is clearly intended. I am interested in how bitterness distorts intended anger. McFall's definition of bitterness contains a strong focus on the communicative nature of the encounter. Bitterness seems to be a particular mode of expression—the recounting of incidents of injury—only in a certain context of interpretation—one in which people no longer care to listen. Both the mode of expression and the failure of uptake combine to form bitterness. We do not typically call people holding bombs bitter. They are expressing their anger so forcefully that we cannot afford not to give them our attention. Furthermore, people whose anger receives uptake are not, on that occasion at least, bitter. They are, instead, angry or even righteous.

The collaboration of a certain mode of expression (recounting of injury) with a certain mode of response (failure to listen) forms bitterness. Although if we encounter this mode of response often enough, we may call ourselves bitter, even privately and silently bitter, it is, at least, not easy to define bitterness apart from the public conditions of its formation: the performance of actions received in a particular way. However, "You're just bitter" is not a designation that characterizes mutual failure in a communicative situation. It is rather a condemnation of one of the people in that situation, the person who expresses what they had, at some point, intended as anger through a recounting of incidents to those who no longer care to listen.

In assessing the potential political force of an accusation of bitterness, then, we must keep in mind the collaboration of interpreters at some point in the formation of bitterness. Bitterness is publicly formed rather than privately formed and then revealed to others. One way to characterize this collaboration is that the refusal to forgive and forget often is related to the failure of others to listen and act. The failure of others to listen may actually determine that the form of the expression counts as a refusal. For example, my intended reluctance to do something may be read as a form of stubbornness in any situation where people are unwilling to understand the reasons for my nonparticipation. And having noted the collaboration of interpreters in the public formation of bitterness, we also must understand the strategy of calling someone bitter, and how, in particular, this criticism works against those most likely to be accused.

By placing responsibility for the failure of a communicative encounter on the expresser, the challenge of bitterness both ignores the collaboration of the interpreter and, significantly, lessens her responsibility for continuing the encounter. The not caring or no longer caring to listen, which helps determine what is a case of bitterness, becomes a reason or excuse

for not listening through a critique of the mode of expression: "I speak out of direct and particular anger at an academic conference, and a white woman says, 'Tell me how you feel but don't say it too harshly or I cannot hear you.' But is it my manner that keeps her from hearing, or the threat of a message that her life may change?" (Lorde, "The Uses of Anger," 125) The interpreter may, as Lorde's critic does, defend her withdrawal by suggesting that the same feelings could be formed in quite a different manner, that Lorde could express anger while doing nothing harsh, and that this is a reasonable condition of the interpreter's continued participation. But certain modes of expression may, of course, be necessary for something to count as anger.

The further obvious strategic force to "You're so bitter" is to block the strategy of anger by shifting both attention away from blameworthy behavior to the mode of expressing blame and the responsibility from the people who could do something about the blameworthy behavior to the expresser herself, who is now meant to account for *her* behavior. The expresser cannot account for or defend her intended anger, however, because her interpreters are no longer listening. "You're so bitter" is meant to be not challenging, but silencing.

We are left with the following problem: should we ever, for ourselves or others, accept the shift in accusation or responsibility that comes with the critique of bitterness, given both the collaboration of interpreters in the formation of this response and the mechanism of silencing that is the goal of the critique? We can only generalize so far; we all know individuals in positions of exceptional privilege who are angry at their lot, and it is the rightful burden of the privileged to make a strong case that their dissatisfactions are worth the time and energy of others. I think, however, that for most people, there is good reason to resist the shift. My concern diverges here from McFall's and does so over our different assessments of the appropriateness of the language of rationality to emotional response.

Although she recognizes that accusations of bitterness are designed to silence and often ought to be politically resisted, McFall's focus is not on whether the criticism of bitterness is itself justified. Her question is rather: in what circumstances are we justified in being and staying bitter? McFall sets two questions about an emotional attitude: "What are the facts to which it is a response?" and "Is this attitude a rational response to those facts?" (McFall, 146). My concern, phrased in a general way, is that calculating rationality may put responsibility on the individual for her attitudes or actions without offering ways of assessing that individual's situation against the political options of others. If, as I believe it to be the case, assessments of rationality are connected most deeply to questions of intelligible agency, what is not within my power to affect may not provide a

rational ground for my actions or responses. That others have different powers will not provide a rationale for *my* acting in a certain way in *my* situation.

What can a woman of Color in america legitimately hope for?

Women of Color in america have grown up within a symphony of anger, at being silenced, at being unchosen, at knowing that when we survive, it is in spite of a world that takes for granted our lack of humanness, and which hates our very existence outside of its service. (Lorde, "The Uses of Anger," 129)

McFall considers bitterness a rational response to the frustration of important and legitimate hopes where a hope is not legitimate if it is patently false, that is, extremely unlikely to be realized. Once the critique of bitterness is given legitimacy—once we say we are tired of this angry litany and you are bitter, it shifts the burden of proof onto you to defend the legitimacy of your hopes. But is it legitimate for you to hope for a sort of treatment you realize you will never get and who has the authority to decide which hopes are legitimate? If the legitimacy of a hope is connected to the likelihood of its realization, then many of the frustrated hopes that lead to the intended anger characterized as bitterness may get categorized as illegitimate hopes. For this reason, we are better off in blocking the criticism than in internalizing this description of our attitude and trying to defend our bitterness, and we should block this especially for people most susceptible to the criticism of bitterness, for this is where it does its most pernicious work.

The criticism of bitterness is most powerful against people whose resources for expressing anger are limited to recounting injury in the hope that others will listen, people who are not in a position to influence politicians, bring lawsuits, make threats, or otherwise express anger irresistibly. The criticism works to maintain this impoverishment of resources because, once a group is dismissed as bitter, others feel under little obligation to work for their empowerment. The particulars of the critique also have their greatest efficacy against the most disempowered. The refusal to forgive is the refusal to break the chain of consequences instituted by another's actions. The bitter are accused of blocking the goodwill that would be exercised toward them if they were not bitter, and thus of further disadvantaging the group to which they belong: "When women of Color speak out of the anger that laces so many of our contacts with white women, we are often told that we are 'creating a mood of hopelessness,' 'preventing white women from getting past guilt' or 'standing in the way of trusting communication and action'" (Lorde, "The Uses of Anger,"

131–32). Both judgment and motives in bringing complaint are thus called into question, and this may lead to a state of paralyzing political doubt. Finally, the accusation of bitterness not only refuses to grant authority to judgments of wrongdoing but also refuses to grant authority to what counts for others as significant memory. Those most likely to be called bitter, moreover, belong to groups that already have the least support and validation for their personal memories and group history, groups for whom actively not forgetting may be the only way to establish a sense of history. The accusation of bitterness may further undermine the struggle for group memory by failing again to provide the uptake that leaves the recounting of incidents established as public record.

Lorde's speeches are angry and not bitter, but I hope my discussion has given some indication of the political fragility of this collaborative achievement. The criticism of bitterness is a powerful political tool that can be used to persuade people that the importance of how they view their lives, as marked by what is recalled and recounted as significant, is of dismissable interest to others. Anyone who speaks from and for an oppressed group can expect to encounter the criticism at its most brutally political. Emma LaRoque, in the preface to an anthology of Native Canadian women's writings, speaks of being a Native author before the days when what Nauves had to say about their own lives secured any uptake:

The interplay between audience reception and publishing cannot be minimized. As one of those earlier Native writers, I experienced and studied what might be called the Native-voice/white-audience dynamic. The inter-actions were often poignant. On another level, we were again rendered voiceless no matter how articulate we were. Apparently unable to understand or accept the truth of our experiences and perceptions, many white audiences, journalists, and critics resorted to racist techniques of psychologically labelling and blaming us. We were psychologized as "bitter," which was equated with emotional incapacitation, and once thus dismissed we did not have to be taken seriously. (LaRoque, xvi–xvii)

Whether the members of subordinate groups can reclaim anger, whether, in particular, they can get angry in the right way at the right time to the right people so that what they are expressing *is* anger, does not depend solely on the actions of these individuals. Viewing the feminist fight for anger in the light of insights about the crucial role of interpretation in affective encounters suggests that in the fight for situations in which our responses are taken seriously and have efficacy, we must deal with the techniques of interpretive dismissal as much as with our own reluctance to get angry. We may try to be angry through our actions and simply not

succeed. The very same actions may succeed as angry actions in a different interpretive context.

I hope to emphasize, through this analysis of bitterness, that the model of interpretation I have developed is useful in understanding some of the political complexities of situations of expressive failure. I have previously argued that as feelings are formed through expression, people can exercise restrictive control over our feelings through controlling our acts of expression and thus dismiss or diminish the possibilities for finding or creating significance in our lives. They can do so in at least two ways: (1) there may be an unequal distribution of the social resources that we use to give form to our feelings. It's important to remember that opportunities for action are such a resource. For example, if I am so moved by the plight of the Tin Man that I wish to leave for Oz immediately, and I do not have the opportunity to take this action, my compassion cannot take a particular form. It may become a kind of mere sentimental wishfulness. (2) People have considerable power as interpreters of our acts of expression and may interpret these acts restrictively.

Diagnoses of bitterness—and, as I shall argue below, sentimentality and emotionality—as a sort of persistent critical uptake to emotional expression seem to serve both of the above purposes at once. They are complex attributions that both depend on and encourage a gendered and/or otherwise unequal distribution of expressive resources. They are used to interpret our expressions narrowly and critically as always either being on the edge of excess or already excessive; they are attempts to limit the range of our expressive acts and to destroy our confidence in the possible success of those acts. Furthermore, bitterness, sentimentality, and emotionality disguise their own operation by suggesting that expressive failure lies with the individual. If the individuation of feeling, however, is a collaborative undertaking, the hypothesis that expressive failure is the responsibility of the person who is trying to express herself ought to be made to bear the burden of proof.

CO-OPTING GENDER: SENTIMENTALITY AND EMOTIONALITY

Kant described the women of his time as creatures of "many sympathetic sensations, good-heartedness and compassion," as well as "very delicate feelings in regard to the least offence" (Kant, quoted in Mahowald, 194). This assessment captures perfectly the sense that to have an emotional life as a woman, to be an ideal woman, in fact, always means to be edging the excessive sensitivity that is a ground for dismissability. But many women have never been regarded as fit for the ideal that I characterize as "the

Kantian feminine," an ideal of a woman formed by white race and upper-class privilege and applicable mainly to such women. I refer to these women as "Kantian women." As bitterness may be used to dismiss those who fall outside the Kantian feminine, diagnoses of sentimentality and emotionality may corset those who fall within it. I used bitterness to discuss the public, collaborative nature of individuating feeling and noted that bitterness has its greatest efficacy as criticism against those who have the fewest resources for expressing anger. Using the framework derived from this discussion, I will use sentimentality and emotionality to show further how strategies of interpretive dismissal can both play on and promote restrictions in the range of resources that we have for communicating and acting on what, for us, is of significance.

I begin by making some uncontentious remarks about gender, expressive resource distribution, and the link between expressive resources and diseases of the affections. My remark on gender is brief. Women are encouraged to express their gender partly through various forms of women's work: for those of us under the sign of the Kantian feminine, this work is primarily nurturance that involves finding the lives of those close to us of great significance and thus, feeling for others. Men are encouraged to express their gender through men's work, whatever form this may take. Among the many types of things we can express, we can express our gender.

I have described expression as the articulation of our psychological lives through various resources. I have phrased it in this way partly to raise questions of access. Moreover, I argued in Chapter 2 that feelings involve a wide range of resources for articulation. We can express the same kind of feeling in many ways. Arguably, the successful expression of feeling also requires a wide range of resources. For example, the successful expression of anger may require resources that can move others to effect change, and what resources are efficacious may vary with circumstances. The presence or absence of kinds of expressive resources also corresponds to gendered diseases of the affections, sentimentality and emotionality. That expressive resources are differentially distributed between women and men suggests that diseases of the affections are primarily a political category of criticism.

We can see this connection between resources and gender and expressive criticism if we limit ourselves, quite crudely, to involuntary but controllable response, action, and language, as three broad categories of potentially expressive behavior and inquire into their historical relation to gender. We can see that Kantian women have been encouraged not to suppress involuntary response, but instead, been licensed and encouraged to express themselves by blushing, crying, smiling, and through a

range of refined bodily and facial gesture. Their range of public action, however, has been limited, as has their access to public institutions that offer sophisticated expressive resources in the form both of participation within the institution (e.g., the art world) and in the powerful metaphorical discourse associated with the institution (e.g., the law, the military, athletics). Men have not been encouraged toward involuntary response and many have been granted the access to actions and institutions denied to women.

The restriction of feminine resources has opened the way to criticisms of sentimentality and emotionality, both of which imply that a mode of expression is indicative of an unhealthy emotional life. *Emotionality* as an assessment of expression seems directly connected to involuntary response. Those women accused of it are thought to betray emotion through voice, gesture, or other bodily reactions, and the feminine behavior that is first encouraged is later interpreted as reactive and symptomatic rather than initiatory, deliberative, and significant. In addition, certain bodily responses, especially tears, can express a range of emotions from joy to rage. The difficulty lies in discovering which emotion is being expressed. I will discuss this in more detail later. *Sentimentality* seems directly connected to action as an expressive resource. Many feelings are expressed through action. Some feelings of great importance to the Kantian feminine—compassion and love, for example—arguably must be expressed through action to be taken as genuine. In "Sentimentality," an article I have already discussed in Chapter 2, Michael Tanner offers an analysis of sentimentality as involving action not appropriately governed by the nature of the occasion. To criticize someone, then, for sentimentality, should require that that person have the opportunity to act appropriately. I shall argue that the connection between sentimentality and the lack of occasion for appropriate action is very complex and affects precisely those emotions—compassion, for example—that require active expression to be genuine.

If the perception of bitterness dismisses what is of significance, accusations of sentimentality and emotionality control what can be of significance. I believe that sentimentality and emotionality require a slightly different framework of analysis from bitterness, which is more straightforwardly dismissive. Like bitterness, sentimentality and emotionality may be used as criticisms of particular acts of expression or of the people who are expressing themselves. In general, like terms denoting virtues and vices (generous, courageous, licentious, etc.), they range both over acts and the character of the person performing these acts. Aristotle does not take up the virtues and vices of emotional expression, and, in the end, I think a virtue analysis is not adequate for these terms, but it is helpful to regard them initially as something like virtue or vice terms. There are at least

three advantages to regarding them in this way: (1) we may contemplate whether the use of these terms suggests that our ways of expression are excessive, defective, or just about right for meeting the objectives of our activities. In this case, the general description of the activity is the articulation of significance. (2) Terms for virtues and vices do not arise independently of what a community values, and so a virtue-based framework will encourage us to contemplate these terms in their critical political use. (3) The activity over which these terms range, expression, requires collaborative individuation for its success, but the terms are applied primarily to persons, and to the actions and moral characters of these persons. They are thus terms that can easily be used in the service of political manipulation. Like bitterness, they assign personal responsibility for the failures of public interaction and can be used to mystify the nature of this interaction and the social stake in its outcome. And, in fact, sentimentality and emotionality operate fairly duplicitously.

Consider:

It is generally agreed that there is something unwholesome about sentimentality: it would certainly be a mistake to think it a virtue. But just what sentimentality is and why it is objectionable is something of a mystery. (Jefferson, 519)

[I]t seems to be all but agreed that sentimentality is no virtue even if it is not, like cruelty or hypocrisy, intrinsically vicious. Something is wrong with sentimentality; the only question is, what is it that is wrong? . . . I will argue that there is nothing wrong with sentimentality. (Solomon, "In Defense of Sentimentality," 305)

These remarks call for some detective work about the nature of these critical terms. Sentimentality and emotionality are particularly interesting because of their doubled nature, their ambiguous status as critical terms. Robert Solomon refers to "sentimentality" as a quasi-ethical term. Sentimentality is never a wholly positive characterization. Mark Jefferson is right that it is clearly not a virtue. Put into an Aristotelian framework, both sentimentality and emotionality are either on the mean or they are species of excess, but it is difficult to tell which. We are unsure whether it is sufficient to criticize someone for being sentimental or whether she has to be "sentimental to a fault." Is it sufficient to criticize someone that we call her "emotional," or does she have to be overemotional?

The odd status of these terms, that they are critical terms that do not unambiguously criticize, and their tie to a distribution of expressive resources that is both encouraged and gendered suggest that these terms

may be a political category of criticism of the sort that is busy condemning what it is, at the same time, somehow promoting. I have argued elsewhere that many of our virtue terms are gendered (see my "The Aristotelian Mean and the Vices of Gender"). When this is the case, certain characteristics can be promoted as virtues for one gender and condemned as vices for the other. This does not quite account for the status of sentimentality or emotionality, for neither is clearly a virtue, but I intend to pursue this kind of analysis as far as it can be taken.

Sentimentality has received more attention than emotionality. Remarks on this condition are scattered through literary theory and philosophy, and recently there have been a number of philosophical articles on the subject that maintain, as their touchstone, the article by Tanner. (See Tanner, Jefferson, Solomon ("In Defense"), and Midgley.)

The attention sentimentality has received focuses on its history as a critical term that went through a rapid transformation, from a rise in the eighteenth century as a term of praise for a refined emotional life to its fall in the mid-nineteenth century to a term of ethical and aesthetic condemnation, a time that coincides with the rise of the Kantian feminine. The period of sentimentality's decline as praise also coincides exactly with the rise of women novelists. In the introduction to *Great Short Works of the American Renaissance* (selections from Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman), the editor, Willard Thorp, describes the change in the period:

The persistent self-sufficiency of these five should be viewed against a new phenomenon of the time in which they wrote—the arrival of the best-seller. . . . In 1855 Hawthorne took note of the situation in an angry letter to his publisher:

America is now wholly given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash—and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed. (Thorp, xi)

This historical coincidence has not been incorporated into a philosophical analysis of sentimentality.

Tanner raises a number of interesting questions about sentimentality: (1) Is it predicated of feelings or people and in what circumstances? (2) Is it a harmful quality? (3) Is there more than a contingent relationship between sentimentality and cynicism or brutality? (4) Is it a historical phenomenon? (128). He does not, however, operate within a sensitive enough political framework to be able to answer the questions he sets: "I have found it too perplexing and difficult a subject to be able to offer more

than a series of loosely related thoughts" (Tanner, 138–39). In particular, Tanner does not take up the criticism of sentimentality as a local historical phenomenon, and this is a particular methodological choice:

There is a clear danger that in attempting to locate the central aspects of sentimentality one will oscillate between dealing with specific feelings and with the people who have them, trying to get to grips with the concept by dealing with a given emotional state, and moving outwards from there into the pattern of life of a person whom we would call sentimental, and hoping this oscillation will give the impression that it is, indeed will be, a dialectical process towards understanding. It won't. (Tanner, 138–39)

If sentimentality is a criticism that has been primarily applied to a particular group of people who are patterning their lives in a particular way, we need to understand this fact to understand what kind of criticism it is, but this is one way in which the use of the term is duplicitous.

In the philosophical treatments of sentimentality specific men (or characters) often are mentioned: Lord Alfred Douglas (by Oscar Wilde), Rousseau (by James and Southey), Rudolf Hess (by Midgley), Othello and Mendelssohn (by Tanner). These men not only are mentioned as illustrations of sentimentality, but also are lambasted, despite the fact that, as Solomon notes, sentimentality is thought to be common to women and its use as a term of criticism for men arose at exactly the same time that women were beginning to write novels ("In Defense," 307–8). James's criticism of Rousseau illustrates the invective at its harshest:

There is no more contemptible type of human character than that of the . . . sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed. Rousseau, inflaming all the mothers of the mothers of France, by his eloquence, to follow Nature and nurse their babies themselves, while he sent his own children to the foundling hospital, is the classic example of what I mean. (James, *Principles*, 1:125)

James goes on to caution against excessive novel reading and theater going ("[it] will produce true monsters in this line") and offers us the portrait of a Russian woman weeping over a play while her coachman freezes waiting for her. But this woman is an imagined type and not a real named individual. The man who is attacked for sentimentality is a real man. The woman, whether she is attacked, or more likely, as Solomon suggests, forgiven, is, in discussions of sentimentality, every white woman of gentle birth, or at least, no one in particular.

I believe we have a somewhat complex historical situation, and only

through this situation will we understand sentimentality. It is not that Kantian women lacked opportunities for action that gives rise to the use of sentimentality as a critical notion, but that they were acting—among other things, they were writing, and in this writing they represented women expressing their emotions through action. *Little Women*, a famous sentimental novel by Louisa May Alcott, begins with the four March girls lamenting the fact that they are poor and that it won't be much of a Christmas without presents and with their father away at war. In chapter 2, titled "A Merry Christmas," they awake, and the servant Hannah informs them that a beggar has come to the door and their mother has gone off to see what is needed. She soon returns, and they greet her in chorus:

"Merry Christmas, Marmee! Many of them! Thank you for our books; we read some and mean to, every day," they cried, in chorus.

"Merry Christmas, little daughters! I'm glad you began at once and hope you will keep on. But I want to say one word before we sit down. Not far away from here lies a poor woman with a little newborn baby. Six children are huddled into one bed to keep from freezing, for they have no fire. There is nothing to eat over there; and the oldest boy came to tell me they were suffering hunger and cold. My girls, will you give them your breakfast as a Christmas present?"

They were all unusually hungry, having waited nearly an hour, and for a minute no one spoke; only a minute, for Jo exclaimed impetuously:

"I'm so glad you came before we began!" (Alcott, 15)

Alcott presents women acting morally, with compassion for those in serious social circumstances, and without the guidance of any man. I suggest that the political response to this type of presentation was the establishment of sentimentality as a limiting (or policing) virtue of feminine expression. It is a virtue because Kantian women are encouraged to cultivate the tender emotions—compassion, for example—for their work as nurturers. It is a limiting virtue because its use as a critical term is to imply that feminine ethical actions when they are outside the domestic sphere, and feminine literary productions, which are outside this sphere, either are not effective or are not appropriate actions, and do not have to be taken seriously. Sentimentality is a virtue of femininity, and so in men it can be condemned as a vice. It has not received an adequate political analysis because it is falsely presented as a general character defect of women for which they are accountable but can do nothing about. Finally, it does not receive an adequate philosophical analysis because philosophers look for a clear use of sentimentality as a critical term. Its status as

a clear and correctable masculine vice will be more salient than its nature as a limiting virtue of feminine expression. These remarks indicate only some of the complexities of the historical circumstances in which the notion of sentimentality emerged as a critical notion in application to expressiveness.

Emotionality has received even less attention than sentimentality as a distinctive kind of criticism tied to expressive resources, although its connection to gender has never been questioned: "Although the emotionality of women is a familiar cultural stereotype, its grounding is quite shaky. Women appear to be more emotional than men because they, along with some groups of people of color, are permitted and even required to express emotion more openly" (Jaggar, 161). This passage is somewhat disturbing in its suggestion that men might maintain a protected private life of feeling. In addition, I think there is more to be said about emotionality, for, of course, anger, the emotion that women have fought so hard for, is very freely expressed by many men.

Like sentimentality, emotionality is a limiting expressive virtue of feminine expression, though one whose imperatives seem to operate more independently of class and race. Women who are not emotional are cold. Women who are emotional are expressing themselves in such a way as to be dismissable. The important feature of emotionality is how women become dismissable. Emotionality is popularly connected to involuntary response as an expressive resource. As remarked, certain bodily responses associated with emotionality, tears notoriously, can be used to express joy, sorrow, frustration, shame, or any range of feelings. They thus give an emotional life the appearance of contingency by suggesting that nothing is any more important than anything else, because there are no discriminations in behavior that mark the importance. Insofar as women cry a lot, they cannot be reliably held to distinguish the important from the trivial. As a student pointed out to me, the deliberate vagueness of the term, which lumps all emotions together, negates the necessity for any specific uptake that would help individuate a feeling, thus promoting what it condemns.

In actual critical use the insinuation of emotionality does not remain tied to involuntary response but can be used to suggest that a woman always lacks control over her emotional life, as evidenced by nearly any manner of expression. James Dickey's review of *To Bedlam and Part Way Back* by Anne Sexton begins: "Anne Sexton's poems so obviously come out of deep painful sections of the author's life that one's literary opinions scarcely seem to matter; one feels tempted to drop them furtively into the nearest ashcan, rather than to be caught with them in the presence of so much naked suffering" (Dickey, in McClatchy, 117). Dickey, as a reviewer,

is in precisely the right position to give certain expressive acts the special critical uptake that will help form for all of us Sexton's insights into her life and madness. Instead, he does not just negate the sophistication of Sexton's expressive resources, he, in fact, pretends that she is not using any special expressive resources but is symptomatically betraying an emotional life she cannot control.

I conclude, tentatively, that both sentimentality and emotionality are limiting expressive virtues of femininity. They police expression through the development or limitation of certain expressive resources that will, at the same time, allow for the dismissal of what is significant to women about our own lives when this significance is a violation of the constraints on gender performance: when we express ourselves, we must do so within the constraints of gender. The pervasiveness of these criticisms of women's affective lives suggests strongly that women are constrained to express gender roles when they express feeling.

Emotionality and sentimentality give the fight for control of anger a special importance. Anger is an emotion that requires judgment and action and is associated with a powerful range of cultural metaphors. Its control can stand as a symbol for access to a range of expressive resources that are so finely discriminated and object-directed that they cannot lead to certain expressive criticisms. But one's intended anger can still, of course, be categorized as bitterness.

HIGH NOON: THE POSSIBILITY OF INARTICULATENESS

This study can be summarized by its denial of the possibility of an inarticulate expressive life that is compatible with a well-articulated life of feeling. Without acts of expression that are publicly interpretable, we have no feelings. Even when we do express ourselves, the difficulties in the interpretation of affect will often lead to affective lives that are dominated by frustration and confusion. This is especially the case when people cannot secure adequate uptake or do not have the power to determine how the occasions of their lives are viewed.

The necessity of expression to the individuation of feeling has been obscured by a long tradition of theory that has concentrated on the classic emotions. This tradition of theory, traced in Chapter 1, has assumed that emotions can be recognized by set patterns of behavior and thus has not investigated the conditions of the interpretability of affect or the special significance of affect as an explanatory category. The theories of expression investigated in Chapter 2 assumed that feelings were individuated prior to expression, again obscuring the conceptual relation between

feeling and expression. In this study, I have argued for the dependence of all feelings, including the classic emotions, on publicly interpretable acts of expression.

The importance of expression and interpretation to a theory of affect also has been mystified by an ideology that holds out the promise of a protected private life without the need of expression. This is the myth of private emotional experience: "This is a study of emotional experience. I am not directly and in the first instance concerned with emotional behavior, emotional expression, or the symptomatology of emotion" (Koch, 60). This myth of emotional experience without emotional expression is obviously very much with us. Feminist theorists, among others, have understood how affective meanings are subject to interpretation and control by the people to whom we express ourselves. They have been, in my view, wrongly, attracted toward social constructivism on the assumption that allowing our emotions to be open social constructions is the only alternative to buying into the myth of an unproblematic first-person authority and privileged access to our feelings. When we accept these myths, we fail to understand how affective meanings are subject to control and manipulation by others. I have argued that epistemic privacy versus social constructivism is a false set of options that confuses private with the personal. Nevertheless, I fully agree that first-person authority and privileged access are well-held myths that have never been applied to women in practice. A private life of feeling, although a conceptual impossibility has, however, been a myth that men have actually been encouraged to live out, at least in the American West.

I conclude this study by taking up the interesting question of the possibility of inarticulateness, a disease of the affections that is deeply involved in Western ideologies as a positive characteristic of masculinity, but should not, on the model of feelings I have been defending, be a possible affective style. To comment on inarticulateness as a possible expressive style, I first return to the discussion of concealment and restraint which I initiated in Chapter 2. I said at that point that Charles Taylor's work on desire indicated what was necessary for an adequate account of expressive success and failure: an understanding of our form of life as communicators as this concerns the communication of feeling. I hope, by this point, to have provided some of this account. Because affective significance is easily manipulated by the interpretive practices of others, our form of life is one where we have much to conceal.

Concealment and expressive restraint are often not only viable, but also necessary, emotional strategies. First, there are penalties, sometimes severe, for not viewing the significance of occasions as those dominant over us would have them viewed. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, the protagon-

nist, Linda, risks death because of her inability to conceal her anger: "He sprang upon me like a tiger, and gave me a stunning blow. It was the first time he had ever struck me; and fear did not enable me to control my anger. When I had recovered a little from the effects, I exclaimed, 'You have struck me for answering you honestly. How I despise you!'" (Jacobs, 61). The slaveowner Flint replies that she is lucky he does not kill her on the spot. Making clear the personal significance of occasions renders us vulnerable, and there are frequently good reasons for keeping this significance to ourselves.¹ Second, to hold on to the personal significance of occasions, we often have to protect our feelings from becoming confused by the response of others to them. But both types of circumstances seem to suppose that feelings can be individuated without their expression.

Are situations involving concealment and/or restraint situations where emotions are individuated independent of expression? If so, they are an obvious challenge to my theory. At the end of Chapter 2, I suggested that the dependence of affect on expression could take stronger or weaker forms and that concealment, as a phenomenon, is more likely to be associated with classic emotions than free-style feelings. The well-specified occasions of classic emotions and the conventions governing expression can lead to abilities to recognize these emotions in ourselves even when our expressions are restrained. The arguments of Chapter 3, the discussion of the importance of an individual's history, gave further explanation of our ability to recognize both emotions and feelings by discussing their habitual development over a history of occasions in a person's life. Our prior involvement in situation types may easily make our recognition of a situation, along with our impulses toward expression, sufficient grounds for knowing what we feel. And at points in Chapters 4 and 5, I argued that securing adequate uptake on some occasions protects our responses from being confuted by others on other occasions and may allow us some confidence about what we feel independently of our acts of expression.

I also took the phenomenon of concealment to support my concentration on expression. Concealment is a contrastive notion to expression. To conceal a feeling is by definition to *not express* it, to prevent something from becoming manifest rather than attempting to make it manifest. Concealment is given its significance within an account of expression and interpretation. Cases where we individuate through concealment or restraint are cases where we have particular expressive opportunities and behave in certain ways related to these opportunities. I do not restrain

1. The way in which Elizabeth Spelman phrases a similar point in "On Treating Persons as Persons," is that to treat others maximally as persons is to attend to their self-conceptions and because of the ways in which such knowledge of us makes us vulnerable, we do not always want to be treated maximally as persons.

myself from yelling at you when you are not there. Much of the action that Cyrano takes in *Cyrano de Bergerac* is action taken to restrain and conceal his feeling for Roxane. I concluded that there is some behavior on which the existence and individuation of a feeling depend. If Cyrano neither acts to express nor acts to conceal his love for Roxane, he would not love Roxane.

I have two further reflections on concealment. First, I was and am cautious about how possible or lasting one's confidence can be in the nature of concealed emotion without some continuing history of expressive success. Cyrano is eloquent, articulate, and familiar with love. We can well accept that he knows that he loves Roxane even while he restrains and conceals that love. A brilliant cinematic representation of the deeper costs of concealment is *The Remains of the Day*. The butler who has devoted his life to the service of the household cannot express love to the housekeeper, although he evidently values her dearly. On each occasion where we think he might express love, he conceals his feelings and talks to her instead of their household duties. The love in this story never develops, never clearly becomes love, because it is too repressed and inchoate. We can see that it could have been love. By the end of the narrative the butler, perhaps, also knows only this much.

Second, an understanding of affective restraint is interestingly complicated, in ways I can only point at, by how pervasive concealment is in the affective lives of many or most of us. Here I return to Taylor's account of the relation of expressive to the individuation of desire. Faced with the example of unconscious desire, Taylor claims that part of what we mean by an unconscious desire is that our awareness of the desire is distorted, the desire is "self-unavailable." We do not mean, however, that the desire is unexpressed: "What was utterly unmanifested . . . couldn't be a desire. (And it is difficult to see how it could play the explanatory role of desire.)" (Taylor, 85). These are related points for Taylor. Our explanatory (and self-determining) vocabulary of desire has arisen and been able to arise because, in what Taylor refers to as the "normal or basic situation," desire produces "unreluctant and unconstrained action." My desires are identified and characterized by such action, and it is the existence of this basic kind of situation that explains why my desires are fit for explaining my actions in the first place.

In "Feeling and Expression," Stuart Hampshire argues that we would not have the category of feeling without the ability to restrain our impulses: suppression of these tendencies gives rise to a feeling vocabulary by isolating the tendencies as possible objects of attention. Hampshire's point has some force for the category of desire. We would, perhaps, not have such an articulate language of desire without the suppression of our

tendencies to act: "Desire and action are not separable components in the basic situation. . . . [but] begin to come apart when I am constrained from action. Then the awareness of the desire can take the form merely of a formulation to myself, or to you, of what I want; or a sense of unease, perhaps" (Taylor, 86). But I agree with Taylor that the explanatory use we make of this category points to unconstrained expression as a basic or normal situation for desire and other cases as parasitic on this normal case.

Hampshire's point seems to have a different sort of force for feeling. I have acknowledged that in our emotional lives, the phenomenon of concealment is extremely pervasive. Hampshire presents this as an unproblematic observation universal in its application to socialized adults. We can see, given, the disruptive potential of many of the classic emotions, why this would be the case.

He was strangling Peterson to the accompaniment of Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor, Opus 16, third movement and it wasn't a nightmare. The music from the adjoining show room was thumping through his head, beating at his heart, pulsating through his fingers as his hands tightened around Peterson's scrawny neck while the words came screaming out of his mouth. And the bastard wouldn't stop talking.

The violence of his reaction to Peterson, albeit inwardly expressed, appalled him. (Gill, 7)

However, concealment is especially pervasive in the lives of those for whom significance conflicts with dominant ways of viewing the world. Moreover, as well as being a necessity for devalued groups in our culture, concealment is an explicit normatively imposed constraint on dominant groups through exhortations to rationality and emotional stoicism. Its desirability as an expressive strategy is further buttressed through the presentation of emotion as always potentially uncontrollable. Finally, the role of affect as an explanatory category, the understanding of personal significance, give us considerable latitude as interpreters to find significance in the unexpressed. Thus, we cannot have any security here that unconstrained expression is the normal or basic case. I believe these insights into the importance of concealment should lead us back, a final time, to reflecting on the importance of concealment of expressive resources. How do we harmonize a need for expressive success with the reality of the many constraints on our expressive opportunities?

Hampshire remarks that: "entry into . . . [an] adult form of life . . . includes among other things, the habit of deliberately controlling the nat-

ural expression of inclination, and includes also a growing knowledge of conventions of speech and behavior. It is characteristic of the more refined concepts, which we use to distinguish between one sentiment and another, that the subject's own avowals are a necessary part of the condition of their application" ("Feeling and Expression," 19). Hampshire's point is that the inappropriateness of some expressive resources will find part of its effect in the development of other resources. I have argued that there is no special group of resources that either uniquely characterizes expression as an activity or that helps delimit the expression of affect. The notion of natural expression, theoretically dominant since Darwin in discussions of emotion, has done much to inhibit our understanding of the complexities of affective expression. I would suggest that it is partly because restraint and concealment are such a dominant part of our affective lives that our resources for expressing affect are so interestingly diverse and that we are so dependent on our interpreters. We can see the value of an interpretive approach to affect by looking at purported cases of nonexpressiveness.

The philosophical and political views that underlie the positive treatment of inarticulateness as a version of emotional stoicism are views that this study has criticized: (1) a commitment to the individuation of psychological states, independently of expressive activity; and also, interestingly, (2) a rejection of interpretability. The consequence of accepting both (1) and (2) is a total distrust of either a shared or an interpretable language as a possible expressive resource. I quote from Emerson, Thoreau, and Tocqueville to illustrate the influential rhetoric that made these views popular:

[T]he reformers summon conventions and vote and resolve in multitude. Not so, O friends! will the God design to enter and inhabit you, but by a method precisely the reverse. It is only as a man puts off all foreign support and stands alone that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner. (Emerson, 169)

If we would enjoy the most intimate society with that in each of us which is without or above, being spoken to, we must not only be silent, but commonly so far apart bodily that we cannot possibly hear each other's voice in any case. (Thoreau, 208)

[N]ot only does democracy make each forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart. (de Tocqueville, 106)

Assumptions about the private nature of our psychological lives, combined with a distrust of language, both foster and are fostered by a commitment to individualism in politics where those who would interpret you or speak for you will only misrepresent you. This may seem like the picture of a life where, without the resources to articulate significance, a life cannot have significance, and so no feelings whatsoever. But a life where neither language nor involuntary response can be used to express feeling may still be a life of action.

When we interpret art, we do so through the limitations of an expressive medium. This is rarely our strategy with affect, but it seems to me appropriate in this case to ask what the medium of articulation could be that makes it possible for white Western men to have confidence in the significance of their own lives. Certainly some of this is provided by the enormous burden women and persons of color adopt as interpreters and nurturers (see Bartky, "Feeding Egos and Tending Wounds," and Tronto); the rest, I suggest, is provided by performing their gender through work:

As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work. Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keep faithfully busy each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the final result to himself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning, to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation. (James, *Principles* 1:127)

In these remarks, made very near the passage on sentimentality quoted in the preceding section, the aesthetic sphere has disappeared from James's thought. Part of what makes the notion of living such a martinate life possible, even appealing, is that the masculine gender is expressed through men's work and that the importance of lives is acknowledged and shared through a mutual understanding of the importance of men's work. This work guarantees significance and community without the need for alternative expressive resources.

The expression of significance through work has been a dominant theme of Western American novels and films. In Jack Shaffer's classic, *Shane*, the protagonist, a gunman, expresses gratitude, loyalty, and the desire profoundly to change his own life through helping the homesteader who feeds him dinner remove an old stubborn stump from the land. The homesteader participates in the work to acknowledge Shane's gratitude, to mark the profound changes that are endangering his homestead, and to show that, though he does not need help in protecting his

land, he will accept Shane's. The two men do not speak for hours of work, but, as the novel develops, it is clear that each has successfully interpreted the other. They communicate, so we are asked to imagine, complex degrees of significance through these seemingly inarticulate acts.²

I believe that we can understand inarticulateness as an expressive style through attention to resources. However, the limited way in which affect can be expressed within this style has the unfortunate consequence that these men's lives risk losing significance to them when they are separated from their work. This consequence, also often presented in American film and literature, displays the poverty of work as a sole expressive resource.

In the classic movie *High Noon* (1952), Will Kane, played by an aging and tired-looking Gary Cooper, is retiring as town Marshal to marry Amy (Grace Kelly), a Quaker. They plan to leave town and run a store, trading men's work for women's work, and western masculinity for Quaker pacifism and community. As they celebrate their marriage, Will receives a telegram warning that Frank Miller, a man he sent to prison, is coming back on the noon train. In American westerns, the train comes in to destroy the illusion that parallel lines never meet. Your destiny will always find you. Will and Amy leave town, but before they get far, Will turns back to face Miller.

The movie has little dialogue. The significant moments occur when Amy, or the various townspeople who are no longer in community with Will, confront Will about why he is coming back to what is no longer his job. He cannot say why it is important to him.

Amy: "I don't understand any of this."

Will: "Well I don't have time to tell you."

Amy: "Then don't go back, Will."

Will: "I've got to—that's the whole thing."

Amy claims that Miller was part of a job, that Will's job is over, and that she still doesn't understand. When Will replies that he is the same man, with or without his badge, Amy says, "That isn't so." Every time someone confronts Will about why he has come back to what isn't his job, he simply says "I've got a lot to do," or "I haven't got time," or "If you don't know, I can't explain it to you," or, finally, "I don't know."

2. We may have some skepticism about these possibilities. In the contemporary Western film, *Tender Mercies* (1983), Mac Sledge, the character played by Robert Duvall, expresses his love for Rosa Lee (Tess Harper) through the work he does around her motel. His stoic masculine character, all action, no talk, and no tears, provoked film critic Pauline Kael to remark with a cheery lack of deference that Duvall should simply wear a T-shirt in the movie, reading: "Life Makes Me Wince." (Kael, 480). Kael was pointing to the defects of hard work as a sole expressive resource.

If a large part of expressing the Kantian feminine is to express feeling, then there is a social stake in expressiveness as an activity, and our critical vocabulary will extend to this activity. If to express the masculine gender is to share work, it may appear as if there is not the same stake in social control and, therefore, that the autonomy of an affective life that is articulate, but unexpressed, is left intact. But if my view of the dependence of our affective lives on our expressive lives is correct, this life is neither unexpressed nor free of social control. An ideology of restraint and concealment, as one of the ideologies that govern affective significance in this culture, controls what can be of significance by limiting available expressive resources and by positioning some groups as the inexhaustibly sensitive interpreters to the rigidly restricted expressive practices of others.

The figures of Shane and Will Kane are meant to move us deeply. Bitterness, sentimentality, and emotionality are terms of interpretive dismissal. They contrast interestingly to inarticulateness, a categorization that suggests, quite explicitly, a poverty of expressive resources that is no fault of the individual, but, in fact, challenges the interpreter to be highly sensitive to the intended effects of behavior in conveying significance.

We would do well to keep the contrast between types of expressive failure in mind when we are subject to or witness to the charge of individual accountability that comes with criticisms of bitterness or emotionality. I hope to have done something to indicate the seriousness of this kind of criticism: there is a seriousness of critical intent elided by the very use of terms that invariably suggest overreaction on the part of the person expressing her feelings. However, because of the relation of feeling to significance, when our feelings are trivialized, ignored, systematically criticized, or extremely constrained by the poverty of our expressive resources, this situation can lead to a very serious kind of dismissal—the dismissal of the significance to a person of his or her own life, in a way that reaches down deeply into what the significance of a life can be to the person whose life it is.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 5

YELLOW KITCHEN GLOVES by Michael Lynch

i. Dressed with an eye towards changes in the day I took the bucks American Express disbursed for bail, joined an affinity group on the lawn wary of, dependent on each other, who snapped ourselves under a rainbow flag and the Senate portico, joined the crowd opposite the Court.

Out of museums, in Washington again—except as Washington's its own museum garnering, displaying power in its plangent colonnades, displaying us claiming our power under these oaks to snowfences ringing the sacred grove of camera tripods—history in our stomachs.

ii. Blocks away, government and science direct their receptionists to order morning coffee and the day: the drugs untried, the less distasteful viruses, and who else can they test that fights back least? A family burnt from its home in Florida not their department, nor is the four-letter word no one likes pronouncing: