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EXPRESSION AND EXPRESSIVENESS IN ART

JENEFER ROBINSON

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI AND UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of expression in the arts is Janus-faced. On the one hand expression is an author-centered notion: many Romantic poets, painters, and musicians thought of themselves as pouring our or ex-pressing their own emotions in their artworks. And on the other hand, expression is an audience-centered notion, the communication of what is expressed by an author to members of an audience. Typically the word "expression" is used for the author-centered aspect of expression as a whole, and the word "expressiveness" is used for the audience-centered aspect, and I shall keep to this usage. In this paper I shall argue that although expression is closely related to expressiveness, the two concepts are distinct and, in particular, expressiveness cannot be analyzed in terms of expression, as has been recently suggested by Stephen Davies and Jerrold Levinson. Nonetheless, the richest examples of expression in the arts involve both expression and expressiveness.

Both expression and expressiveness are concepts that have their home in ordinary life and are then extended to the arts. I begin by giving a brief account of artistic expression, and then turn to artistic expressiveness.

II. EXPRESSION

In ordinary life, an expression of emotion is a piece of behavior that (1) issues from somebody or other who is actually experiencing the emotion, and (2) manifests or reveals that emotion in such a way that other people can perceive the emotion in the behavior. Artistic expression has the same basic structure and function as expression in ordinary life. That's why it is properly called "expression." The Romantic poets, painters, and composers who talked of themselves as expressing their emotions in

their works thought of themselves as revealing in their artworks the emotions that they themselves were actually experiencing or remembering experiencing and thereby enabling other people (and maybe themselves as well) to understand what it is to be in that emotional state.[1] R.G. Collingwood gave the classic formulation of this view:

> When a man is said to express an emotion, what is being said about him comes to this. At first, he is conscious of having an emotion, but not conscious of what this emotion is. All he is conscious of is a perturbation or excitement … From this helpless and oppressed condition he extricates himself by doing something which we call expressing himself.[2]

In some cases it is clear that an expression of emotion in art is just like an expression of emotion in life. If the histrionic teenager down the road were to say sincerely and seriously, "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" the utterance would be an *expression of emotion*, a painful emotion of frustration and despair, just as it is in Shelley's poem. Artistic expressions are expressions primarily because they issue or at least seem to issue from somebody or other who is actually experiencing the emotion. The work provides *evidence* that the person is experiencing (or has experienced) the emotion. As Bruce Vermazen puts the point, when "faced with a putative … object," that expresses emotion, the interpreter "imagines that the object has been uttered by someone, ... and then asks himself what mental economy would be behind such an utterance, what properties of an utterer would make it appropriate to utter just such an object as this."[3]

The utterance I have just quoted from the Shelley poem is an expression of emotion in the dramatic protagonist of the poem, but in this instance it is very likely to be an expression of emotion in the author of the poem as well: it seems to issue from some state of frustration and despair that is being experienced by the protagonist, whom we have good reason to identify with Shelley himself. Sometimes, however, it's a character in an artwork that is doing the expressing, as when King Lear

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1 Cf. Wordsworth (1802): "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" that are "recollected in tranquillity."

2 Collingwood (1963), pp. 109-110.

3 Vermazen (1986), pp. 208-9. Vermazen actually says "When faced with a putative expressive object…" but I am trying here to distinguish an expressive object from one that expresses emotion in e.g. the maker of the object. Vermazen's account, as his title suggests, is an account of expression in art, not expressiveness.

expresses his rage, his frustration, his disgust with the world and his despair, or when the Madonna in Grunewald's *Crucifixion*

http://www.artchive.com/artchive/G/grunewald/grunwld1.jpg.html

expresses in face and gesture her anguish at the death of Christ. Sometimes it is a narrator or an "implied author"[4] who expresses the emotion, as the implied author of Jane Austen's novels (who in this case is also their narrator) expresses her ironic amusement at the foibles of her characters. The important point is that in cases of genuine expression, there is always someone who is expressing an emotion that he or she is actually experiencing or has experienced. Where the agent expressing the emotion is imagined, he or she is imagined as expressing emotions that he or she actually experiences. This is not the only requirement on expression but it is a crucial one. Expression is fundamentally something that agents or imagined agents (implied artists, narrators or characters) *do* (or are imagined as doing).

In ordinary life, the expression of emotion can consist in physiological changes, including facial and vocal expressions, as well as gestures, posture, motor responses and "action tendencies" of approach or avoidance. It can also consist in the expression of a point of view on the world, as when angry people verbally express their sense of affront or fearful people describe the threats they see. Sometimes the emotion colors the whole world, as when in anger I see offenses all around me and in happy love I experience the whole world as my oyster. Expressions of emotion may then take a global form: "Everyone is deliberately insulting me!" or "The world is a wonderful place!" In art we find analogues of many of these modes of emotional expression.

a. Expressing emotions by means of gestures, posture, facial expressions, and action tendencies

In most movies what's depicted is a "slice of life," and characters are depicted as expressing their emotions in all the ways that human beings can in ordinary life: in speech and action as well as in physiological changes, action tendencies, facial and vocal expressions, and so on. Representational paintings and sculptures, though

[4] For the concept of the implied author see Booth (1961).

usually immobile, can express emotions by depicting people who are expressing their emotions in facial expression, posture, gestures, and action tendencies. The virile gestures of the Horatii in David's famous painting

http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/art/resourcesb/dav_oath.jpg

express their determination, optimism, and courage, whereas the droopy flaccid poses of their womenfolk express their tenderness and fearfulness (as well as their feminine helplessness and weakness).[5] Similarly, a sculpture can represent not only a person's facial expression but also the expression of emotion in posture and gestures, as when Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*

http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/rodin/rodin_calais.html

represents the six burghers as each expressing a very different emotion, ranging from fear to despair to anguish to heavy-heartedness to painful acceptance of their destiny.[6]

Dance is the preeminent art of expression by bodily movement. Characters in a dance piece can express such emotions as tender love, prideful disdain, and abject terror by enacting postures and gestures, action tendencies and bodily movements characteristic of these emotions.

b. Expressing emotions by describing or representing a point of view

The literary arts express emotions in a rather different way.[7] A poem in which the dramatic speaker says "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" is a poem in which the dramatic speaker is verbally expressing his emotions of frustration and despair.[8] Lyric poetry is full of such expressions, some specific and some more global. When Robert Browning writes "Oh to be in England now that April's there!" he is expressing his nostalgia for the English Spring. Browning's nostalgia is focused fairly narrowly, but

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[5] For an interesting recent account of expression in paintings, see Lopes (2005).

[6] The sculpture is notable partly because none of the expressions it portrays are appropriate to heroes in a patriotic sculpture.

[7] Although poetry may have, to some degree a "tone of voice," reflected in how the poet seems to want the lines to be performed (slowly and heavily or brightly and chirpily, for example). Robert Stecker also comments on the contrast between expression in literature (in particular) and instrumental music (Stecker (1984)), although his conclusions are different from mine.

[8] I say "his" because in this case there is reason to think that the speaker is a persona of the poet Shelley himself.

the dramatic speaker of the *Ode to the West Wind* appears to find all of life painful and full of difficulties. In drama, characters frequently express their emotions verbally as well as in gesture and posture. Song and opera raise special problems because they are musical forms, but songs also verbally express the emotions of a protagonist, as in lyric poetry or of characters, as in many ballads. In opera characters spend a great deal of their singing time expressing their emotions.

A painting of the Crucifixion in which the Madonna is represented as expressing her grief and anguish at the foot of the cross, does not necessarily express grief and anguish itself (although it may). The way in which the artist has depicted the scene may instead express *horror*[9] at the cruelty inflicted on Christ, *compassion* for Christ's suffering and for that of his followers, or *awe* at one of the great Christian mysteries. In these cases the painting as a whole expresses not the emotions and attitudes of the characters within the work but the emotions and attitudes of the (implied) maker of the painting.[10] We can see these emotions and attitudes in the *point of view* from which the content of the painting is represented.

There are different ways in which an artist can express a point of view in an artwork. When Shelley's protagonist cries, "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" he is expressing his emotion(s) by articulating his "vision" of the world. Representational paintings and photographs can do something similar. Richard Wollheim cites Edwin Smith's photograph of Castle Stalker in Appin, Argyllshire as an example of the way the world looks to a person in a melancholy state of mind. By

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[9] Ernst Gombrich describes Grünewald's Isenheim altarpiece as depicting the reality of the Crucifixion "in all its unmitigated horror." Grünewald provides "a sermon in pictures," proclaiming "the sacred truths as taught by the Church. The central panel of the Isenheim altarpiece shows that he sacrificed all other considerations to this one overriding aim. Of beauty, as the Italian artists saw it, there is none in this stark and cruel picture of the crucified Savior." Gombrich (1972), p. 270.

[10] Guy Sircello has pointed out that artworks often express the artist's emotions and attitudes by means of what he calls the "artistic acts" in a work. For example, Poussin's *Rape of the Sabine Women* is an *aloof*, *detached* painting because, despite the violent subject matter, Poussin "*observes*" the scene of rape and pillage "in an aloof, detached way." Prokoviev's music for Peter's grandfather in *Peter and the Wolf* is *witty* because "the composer wittily *comments* on the character" in his music. Wordsworth's poem "We are Seven" is sentimental "because Wordsworth *treats* his subject matter sentimentally." Sircello (1972), p. 25.

representing the landscape *as seen* in a certain way, Smith manages to express the emotions of the artist who is apparently *seeing* the world in this way.[11]

But artists can express their emotions not only by the way they depict a scene but also by the way they manipulate their medium. Pollock's "action paintings" express emotion because they seem to have been produced by actions or gestures that express the artist's (or his persona's) emotions.[12] The same effect can be achieved in representational paintings. Thus some of Van Gogh's landscapes, for example, express the way the world appears to the artist by means of his impassioned treatment of the brooding menacing clouds, the tormented flame-like cypresses and the unsteadily gyrating earth. The paintings express Van Gogh's own anxiety, even terror.

http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/gogh/fields/

Different modes of expression can be combined. Kathe Kollwitz's etching *Woman with Dead Child*

http://www.mystudios.com/women/klmno/kollwitz_child.html

shows a mother apparently seated on the ground with legs crossed, holding her dead child in a close embrace. It shows the mother expressing desperate grief as well as love for her child, but it also expresses the artist's compassion for these people. Emil Nolde's paintings of dancing (such as *Dance around the Golden Calf*

http://www.artchive.com/artchive/N/nolde/golden_calf.jpg.html

[11] Wollheim (1987), p. 80. Wollheim has in mind the spectator rather than the artist. He says that when we see a scene such as that depicted in the photograph, a "mood of loneliness and despair … creeps over us." (p. 81) He also recognizes those cases in which "we are in the grip of some strong or poignant emotion, and this emotion then comes to colour everything we set eyes on." (p. 81). Wollheim goes on to analyze "expressive perception" in terms of psychological projection, a move I would resist. In *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art*, I show how Caspar David Friedrich's spiritual vision of the world is expressed by the point of view from which the (implied) artist depicts his landscapes.

[12] As Kendall Walton has pointed out, the paintings have the look of having been produced by virtue of these actions. Walton (1979).

and *Candle Dancers*

http://www.artchive.com/artchive/N/nolde/candle_dancers.jpg.html)

show the dancers as dancing in a kind of ecstatic frenzy and thus expressing their frenzied and ecstatic state of mind, but at the same time the way Nolde paints seems itself to be frenzied and ecstatic, and his depiction of the dancers in this style expresses what is apparently his own ecstatic frenzy. So in painting the dancers in the way that he does, Nolde both represents the dancers expressing their own emotions and expresses his own emotions towards the dancers.

In these examples, the artwork is said to express an emotion *e* just because the artist expresses an *e*-ish point of view in the work or paints in an *e*-ish way.[13] But there are other examples in which the point of view in the work expresses an emotion that it doesn't make sense to attribute to the work itself. Thus Constable's love of the English countryside, especially "all that lies on the banks of the Stour," is expressed in his work by his loving attention to "willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts, and brickwork."[14]

http://www.huntington.org/Information/constable.htm

But the landscape paintings themselves do not love anything. Similarly, Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn* expresses yearning for a timeless world of art and beauty, but the poem itself doesn't yearn for anything.

c. Expression in Music

Many theorists have thought that there is a special problem with the expression of emotion in "pure" instrumental music, where there are apparently no agents doing the expressing as in song or opera,[15] and where the behavior that expresses the emotion consists in playing music, which at first blush does not seem to be anything like any expressions of emotion in ordinary life. Of course, a piece of instrumental music can express attitudes or emotions in its (implied) author, as when we speak of Berlioz's

[13] In Sircello's formulation, the artist performs an *e*-ish artistic act.
[14] Quoted from Constable in Gombrich (1960), p. 324.
[15] By contrast, since dance requires dancers, even abstract works of dance can potentially express emotions in the same way as works of dance that tell a story.

love for colorful orchestration or J. S. Bach's delight in intricate fugal patterns. But it seems as though expression of most of the sorts I have described, which is directly analogous to emotional expression in ordinary life, is just not possible.

However, both Edward T. Cone and Jerrold Levinson have independently argued that there are in fact good reasons for thinking that music should be heard as an expression of emotion in an agent or persona in the music. As Cone points out, "a basic act of dramatic impersonation" underlies all poetry and literary fiction.[16] As we have just seen, even the most sincere poetic expression of emotion such as Shelley's is uttered by a dramatic speaker. Cone suggests that

> all music, like all literature, is dramatic; that every composition is an utterance depending on an act of impersonation which it is the duty of the performer or performers to make clear.[17]

A lyric song is often an outpouring of emotion by a dramatic speaker/singer just like the lyric poem on which it is based. Both the poem "Gute Nacht," and the eponymous song from Schubert's *Winterreise* cycle are expressions of the protagonist's gloom and despair. A ballad is usually more like a narrative, with a narrator – who may be expressing his or her emotions – as well as with dramatic utterances by characters who are expressing their emotions during the events recounted in the story. Cone goes on to generalize this idea first to program music such as Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* and then to "pure" instrumental music:

> In every case there is a musical persona that is the experiencing subject of the entire composition, in whose thought the play, or narrative, or reverie, takes place - whose inner life the music communicates by means of symbolic gesture.[18]

Cone is over-generalizing here. It is no doubt true that most music composed outside the electronic music lab is composed by a thinking, feeling composer, but this is different from saying that the composer somehow injects himself into the music so that there is a persona of the composer *in the music* whose inner life the music

[16] Cone (1974), p. 2.
[17] Ibid., p. 5.
[18] Ibid., p. 94.

communicates. Some Romantic composers specifically talked and thought this way, but the idea of music as self-expression in this sense was an innovation of Romanticism. Such a way of thinking would have seemed very strange to Bach or Rameau. For this reason, I think it is appropriate to look for musical personae only in Romantic and post-Romantic music that can plausibly be interpreted this way either because the composer explicitly encourages such an interpretation, as in the *Symphonie Fantastique*, or because the composer is working in light of this kind of precedent.[19]

Now, it's true that there are no literal agents in instrumental music. We have to imagine them. But we also have to imagine the performer of a dance work as a black swan or a nutcracker, the singer of "Gute Nacht" as a lovelorn youth and the speaker of Shelley's *Ode* as a Romantic poet. We have to imagine what Nolde's dancers are like; we are not given a photographic image of them. And we have to imagine what Constable's mental landscape is like from contemplating the painted landscapes that he made. Hence it is not as if we are doing something so very different when we imagine a persona in a piece of instrumental music, especially when there is warrant from the composer, as in Berlioz. Just as we *treat* a dance piece or a painting as expressions of emotion in an agent or persona, whether it be the authorial persona or a character in the work, so we *treat* some pieces of music as expressions of emotion in a persona whom we imagine in the work.[20]

d. Expression in life versus expression in art

The examples I have enumerated are all examples of artworks that express emotions in ways that are analogous to the ways in which people express their emotions in ordinary life. Nevertheless, despite the analogies between much artistic expression

[19] Clear examples include (1) Robert Schumann who explicitly described some of his work as involving a conflict between two aspects of his personality, the "Florestan" aspect and the "Eusebius" aspect, and (2) Dmitri Shostakovich who used a signature motif in some of his music that seems to dramatize the composer's own psychological states. See Karl and Robinson (1995): pp. 401-415. In *Deeper than Reason* I give an extensive defense of the notion of a musical persona in music of this kind. For the opposing viewpoint see Davies (1997), pp. 95-109.

[20] Here I am generalizing a suggestion made by Jerrold Levinson in his discussion of "expressiveness" in music. Levinson has emphasized that we can *hear* music *as* the expression of emotion in a persona. See Levinson (1996), pp. 90-125. Later in this paper I will question whether Levinson's view is really a view about expressiveness rather than expression.

and the expression of emotion in ordinary life, there are also significant disanalogies that have often been noted.[21]

First, to make an artwork is often a long and deliberate process, very different from what R. G. Collingwood called the "betrayal" of emotion in physiological changes or unstudied gestures.[22] Artists may not know ahead of time what emotion their finished work will express, as Collingwood stipulated, but they usually know that they are writing a poem or painting a painting that will express to the best of their ability some emotion or other, and they also intend for the expression of emotion to be visible or audible in the work itself. Expression in ordinary life is obviously not usually a matter of intentionally putting out evidence that one is in a particular emotional state, and intending it to be perceived as such evidence. Ordinary expression is usually a good deal more spontaneous.[23] And by the same token, even the Romantic artists who explicitly acknowledge they are trying to express their emotions in a work are also careful craftsmen who, in the process of expressing their emotions, are constructing an art object.

Second, the idea that the emotions expressed in an artwork are the emotions of a persona or implied author rather than a real person suggests that when we call an artistic expression of emotion an *expression*, we are *treating* it as a genuine expression of emotion, even though this requires some imaginative activity on our part. We are not always experiencing a sincere outpouring by an actual person before us, as when we see and listen to an actual person weeping out of grief. Instead, we are perhaps watching a performer in a dance or a theatrical work who is enacting an expression of emotion; the expression *seems* to be an outpouring by the character, although the performer is herself (to some extent) unmoved. Or we are looking at characters in a painting or sculpture who appear to be expressing emotions: we interpret the depicted characters as expressing their emotions. Or we infer from the painter's or poet's treatment of the theme or content of the artwork that the artist is expressing his or her own emotions or attitudes towards that theme or content, but we recognize that it is really only the implied author, the author as he or she seems to be

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[21] Peter Kivy says that "expression" in the phrase "artistic expression" is a "term of art." See Kivy (2006), p. 299.

[22] But Collingwood probably makes too much of this distinction. For example, *The Oath of the Horatii expresses* the fearfulness and tenderness of the womenfolk by showing how they *betray* their emotions.

[23] But not all expression outside the arts is spontaneous. As Peter Goldie reminds me, there are ritualized expressions of emotion in non-artistic contexts, such as (some) funerals.

from the evidence of the work, who is expressing 'his' or 'her' emotion. Or we hear the expression of emotion in a persona in a piece of instrumental music.

Thirdly, even when we are being shown in gestures and posture the way an agent feels about the world, these gestures and postures are not exactly like what we are accustomed to in real life. Dance movements in a ballet that express tender love or prideful disdain may be similar but not identical to such movements in ordinary life. Nolde's Expressionist vision of his ecstatic dancers is obviously not what he actually sees as he looks about the world.

Fourthly and relatedly, artistic expressions are not just expressions. In addition to being expressions, they are usually aiming to be beautiful, graceful or formally interesting in some other way. Real grief is often ugly to behold. Grief in the graceful movements of a ballet dancer can be a delight.

However, despite these several disanalogies, the kernel of the idea of emotional expression in life persists in emotional expression in the arts. The whole point of calling a work of art an "expression of emotion" is that it *seems*, at least, to emanate from an artist or performer or character or persona who either is or appears to be in the throes of an emotion and who is laying bare his heart, as it were, to himself as well as to the rest of us. The concept of art as expression derives from the Romantics, who thought that art could be a genuine outpouring by an artist of his real inner feelings. Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* is a paradigm of expression in this sense: it is not only the dramatic speaker who is expressing his emotions but the poet himself who speaks through the dramatic speaker.

III. EXPRESSIVENESS

I have identified expressions of emotion in both ordinary life and in art as seeming to issue from a person or persona who is actually experiencing (or has experienced) the emotion expressed. But expressions are not just outpourings by expressers of emotion; they are also means of communicating emotions to others. In ordinary life, inter-personal communication via the expression of emotion is essential to the smooth functioning of human social life (not to mention social life among other social primates such as chimps). You smile in conciliatory fashion and I know you are a friend, or at least that you are not a threat. You snarl at me in anger and I know I'd better be conciliatory.

People's *expressions* of emotion can be more or less *expressive*. In ordinary life often all that matters is that I pick up on what emotion you are expressing, whether cheerfulness or anger. The expression does not have to be very *expressive*. A smile is enough to indicate that you are friendly and not a threat to me; you don't have to fall down before me and clutch my knees. Earlier I tried to show that expression in the arts is similar in crucial ways to expression in ordinary life. The same is true of the *expressiveness* of expressions. Facial expressions, gestures and postures can all be more or less expressive. Among tennis players, Bjorn Borg and Roger Federer are relatively inexpressive on court. Certainly they are much less expressive than John McEnroe or Marat Safin. Although both Federer and Safin are no doubt experiencing emotions as they play, we often get very little inkling of what Federer is feeling, whereas every bad shot by Safin is accompanied by a groan, a curse, or a thrown racket. Although both of them get frustrated at times, Safin expresses his frustration in an expressive way and Federer usually does not. In ordinary life, one person expresses joy with a small smile; another gives a broad grin, leaps about, and kisses everyone in sight. We say that one is more *expressive* than the other. Not that expressiveness is always noisy or vulgar: more subtly, a person's face may "light up" in a genuine Duchenne smile, with not only upturned mouth, but with slightly wrinkled nose, sparkling eyes, etc.

So what is expressiveness? It is, I think, a *cognitive* notion. Expressions reveal something about the nature of the emotion expressed. A relatively inexpressive expression shows us only that the person doing the expressing is in a particular emotional state. But if the expression is also relatively expressive, we are also shown something about what it is like to be in that state. When I see a person looking a bit glum, I infer that the person is feeling a bit glum, but when I see a person weeping, holding herself, moaning and rocking back and forth, I also get some sense of what this person is experiencing: the behavior is far more revealing of the emotional state being expressed. Similarly, a person might express his state of mind verbally by saying "I feel low." Or he can tell me of

> A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
> A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
> Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,

In word, or sigh, or tear…[24]

In that the second expression of dejection is so much more expressive than the first, I learn from it far more about how it feels to be in such a state.

One important way in which expressiveness can be accomplished is by evoking the emotion expressed in other people (from an appropriate cultural background) who are reasonably sensitive and perceptive.[25] Sometimes, in observing expressive facial expressions, gestures and posture or hearing expressive vocal intonations, the evocation of emotion is direct and visceral. These are cases of *emotional contagion*, i.e. when our "subjective emotional experiences are affected, moment to moment" by automatic and unconscious mimicry of other people's "facial expressions, voices, postures, movements, and instrumental behaviors." In this way, "people tend to 'catch' others' emotions, moment to moment."[26] At other times, the emotional effects of emotional expressions on other people are cognitively mediated, as when I come to understand a person's (emotional) point of view by adopting or imagining adopting that point of view. If I say a person is unreliable and deceitful, you can grasp my point of view "cognitively," but if I say, more expressively, that he's a slimy snake, you get a better picture of how I regard him and thus of what my emotions are towards him.

Emotional reactions to expressive emotional expressions do not always mirror the emotion expressed. Thus I may have a contagious response to a person in the throes of grief and expressing grief in a very expressive way, but I may also have a *compassionate* or possibly a *contemptuous* response rather than simply grief. These reactions may be appropriate without being identical to the emotion expressed.[27] Nevertheless, such cases typically depend on an initial contagious reaction of grief: I feel her grief and I am moved to compassion. Or I feel her grief and I judge it excessive: it's only her neighbor's budgerigar that has died, not a close relation. (And perhaps I simply resent being made to feel such grief and want to protect myself against it.) So even in these cases the expressive way that the grief is expressed is what teaches us something of what it is like to be in that grieving state. It is simply that we may also have an emotional reaction to the person's being in that state.

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[24] Coleridge (1802), p. 308.

[25] Obviously I am ignoring many complications here. People differ in their susceptibility to the emotions of other people.

[26] Hatfield et al (1994), pp. 10-11

[27] What makes one emotional response to an artwork *appropriate* and another *inappropriate* is a question that I discuss at length in *Deeper than Reason*.

Just like expression, expressiveness in art mirrors expressiveness in life. First of all, throughout the arts there is a contrast between expressions that are relatively expressive and those that are relatively inexpressive. The examples of artistic expression that I used above are all highly expressive expressions. Grünewald's Madonna and Kollwitz's mourning mother, for example, are depicted as expressing their emotions very *expressively*, with facial expressions, gestures and postures that poignantly reveal the nature of the emotions expressed. In a similar way, dance movements or musical gestures can be more or less expressive, and, correspondingly, more or less moving. *Jingle Bells* is arguably an expression of cheerfulness, but it is not very expressive music: it is monotonous and banal, even annoying. A more expressive piece of cheerful music would be the culmination of Beethoven's *Egmont* with its expressive expression of triumphant joy. Similarly, a piece of music can be sad in a boring mindless inexpressive way (plod plod plod in the base, moan moan moan in the treble) or in a more revealing and expressive way as in Purcell's funeral music for the death of Queen Mary or the Beethoven funeral march from the *Eroica* symphony.

The same is true of verbal expressions which express an emotion by expressing a point of view on the world. Instead of declaiming "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" Shelley could simply have said "I feel terrible. Life's a pain." The one utterance is a lot more *expressive* than the other. Similarly, if I want to convey how I'm feeling by pictorial means, I can draw you an upside-down smiley-face, or point you to Munch's painting *Melancholy*.

http://www.edvard-munch.com/Paintings/love/melancoly_3.jpg

The upside-down smiley face is just not very expressive. It is not informative about my emotion beyond the bare fact that I'm not feeling too good. But Munch's Expressionist painting gives a vivid sense of what it is like to be in a melancholy state. It is flamboyantly expressive, rather like the person who leaps about and kisses everybody. Contrast those Constable's paintings that I said express his *love* of the slimy posts and rotten planks in the valley of the Stour. They are expressive in a subtler way. By paying careful attention to their particular tactile and visual qualities, Constable makes them visually interesting and reveals their unexpected beauty. This, I would say, is an expressive way of expressing his love. By contrast an artist who

paints nothing but cabbages, but without showing us anything interesting about the cabbages he paints, is no doubt expressing his love of cabbages thereby, but he's not doing it in an expressive way.

An artwork that expresses an emotion in an expressive way is one that reveals something of what it is like to be in such an emotional state. In art as in life this often means that the artwork succeeds in evoking a responsive emotion in audiences. In contrasting the arousal of emotion with the expression of emotion by artworks, R. G. Collingwood claimed that "a person arousing emotion sets out to affect his audience in a way in which he himself is not necessarily affected," whereas "a person expressing emotion … is treating himself and his audience in the same kind of way; he is making his emotions clear to his audience, and that is what he is doing to himself."[28] Collingwood thought that a successful expression was one that communicated directly to audiences in that it succeeds in getting the audience to recreate for themselves the emotion expressed either actually or in imagination. In my terms, he thought that an *expressive* expression is one that the audience could recreate for themselves in this way.

This point is perhaps easiest to illustrate with respect to dance. The audience at a work of dance mimics in imagination the bodily movements of the dancers on the stage. Because of this, they can actually feel what the dancers are expressing. Of course the audience is not actually dancing about in the aisles; their own bodily activity is largely suppressed. But their muscles may tense, their blood may race, and they may feel *as if* they are extending their arms, flexing their legs, and so on even as they are sitting quietly in the theatre. Moreover, because dance evokes bodily responses in the audience, it is peculiarly capable of communicating what it *feels like* to be proud and resentful or in the throes of young love or stricken with grief or rage.[29]

But when we look at paintings that are expressive because they render expressively the expression of emotion in depicted characters, something very similar happens. Looking at Grünewald's Madonna or Picasso's *The Old Guitarist*

http://www.artic.edu/artaccess/AA_Modern/pages/MOD_1_lg.shtml

[28] Collingwood (1963), pp. 110-111.
[29] See e.g. Rizzolatti et al (1996), pp. 131-141. The discovery of so-called mirror neurons has spawned a wealth of philosophical speculation about emotional contagion and empathy.

or Kollwitz's grieving mother, we are not only brought to imagine seeing someone who is in that attitude, but also to imagine what it would be like to be in that attitude oneself. As Currie and Ravenscroft have shown, "the various modes of imagery depend largely on the cognitive mechanisms that underpin the corresponding mode of perception,"[30] so that *imagining seeing* the mother enfolding her dead child employs the same mechanisms as *actually seeing* a person in that position, and imagining seeing someone in the contorted posture of the old guitarist activates the same mechanisms as seeing someone actually in that posture. As we saw, there is evidence that when we focus on someone else who is exhibiting expressive emotional behaviors, including motor and other bodily activity, we are apt to engage in imagination in the same motor and bodily activity that we are witnessing. Consequently, we are able to get some sense of what it feels like to be in the emotional state depicted.

The same is true of action tendencies represented in painting. I not only observe the feverish dancers Nolde paints. Nolde gets us to feel what it is like to dance in a wild, sensual and ecstatic manner. In studying the gestures of the dancers and the violent swirls of brightly colored paint in which Nolde renders them, we feel in imagination those same violent gestures, and are thus put into a bodily state which is a version of the bodily state the dancers themselves are represented as having. These bodily states are in fact characteristic of a certain feverish emotional state. In engaging with the painting, I can come to feel *with* the feverish emotions both they and their maker express, just as I feel with the emotions expressed by an actual expressive dance piece.[31]

Music is particularly good at getting listeners to feel what it is like to move in a leaden, ponderous, sorrowful way or a sprightly cheerful way: there is abundant empirical evidence that music directly affects the motor system, and puts us into a bodily state characteristic of the emotion (or maybe mood) in question. The feeling induced may then reveal something of what it feels like to be in that emotional state.

[30] Currie and Ravenscroft (2002), p. 78.
[31] See footnote 29.

As William James said in *The Principles of Psychology*:

> Smooth the brow, brighten the eye, contract the dorsal rather than the ventral aspect of the frame, and speak in a major key, pass the genial compliment, and your heart must be frigid indeed if it do not gradually thaw![32]

Again, this is a matter of degree. Generic cheery music such as *Jingle Bells* can change heart rate and get us moving in rhythm with the music. But *Jingle Bells*, although cheerful music, is not very expressive. It induces only a generically cheerful emotion. By contrast, the culmination of Beethoven's *Egmont* gets us to feel some of the peculiarly triumphant joy that the piece expresses by affecting us directly in a unique bodily way and thereby directly inducing the corresponding unique emotional state.[33]

The verbal arts do not affect us in such a direct bodily way, but they can affect us emotionally by influencing our perspective on the world. If you say "Life's a pain," I understand that you aren't feeling good, but do not get much sense of exactly how you are viewing the world. But when Shelley says: "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" I may come to see the world from the dramatic speaker's perspective, and in so doing come to feel to some extent the same way as the speaker. Similar effects are possible in representational painting, as when I see Smith's photograph of the melancholy shore and I come to feel melancholy myself. Or I study Constable's paintings and I come to feel as he evidently did about the slimy posts and watermills of the Essex countryside: I see things from his point of view and adopt his emotional perspective.

Often an expressive artwork employs more than one method for inducing in audiences the emotion expressed by the work. Thus Kollwitz enables us to recreate the grief expressed by her painting by inducing us to mimic in imagination the posture and gestures made by her mourning mother, and thus to experience something of what it is like to be in such a state of grief. We respond much as we would respond to a woman in real life who is expressing her grief expressively. However, Kollwitz has also depicted the mother from a compassionate *point of view*, so that, in addition to feeling some of the bodily manifestations of grief, I can also recreate – in a more

[32] James (1981), pp. 1077-78.
[33] Compare the "weak arousal theory" defended by Aaron Ridley in Ridley (1995).

cognitive process – Kollwitz's compassionate point of view on the grief-stricken woman.[34]

III. EXPRESSION AND EXPRESSIVENESS

I have suggested that expression should be thought of as a relation between an artwork (the expression) and an expresser, who is either the author or an imagined agent such as the implied author, a narrator or a character in the work. By contrast, I have treated expressiveness as a relation between the expression and the audience to whom it communicates. Whether something is or is not an expression depends on whether it is a product of a person or agent who is expressing his or her emotions. Expressiveness, on the other hand, depends on how effectively the artwork reveals to a (suitable) audience what that emotion is like. I have suggested that among the most effective ways of doing this is to evoke that emotion[35] in the audience.

If this is right, then it seems to follow that expression is neither necessary nor sufficient for expressiveness. It is relatively uncontroversial to argue that expression (as I have described it) in not *necessary* for expressiveness (as I have described it). Many people from Tormey to Davies have argued that there can be expressive works of art, or works of art that are expressive of some particular emotion without being expressions of that emotion in an author or anyone else. If expressiveness is a cognitive virtue, as I have called it, then it would seem that an *apparent* expression, if it is expressive, can tell us a lot about the emotion it seems to be expressing even if there is no genuine act of expression occurring. But this is not my primary concern in this paper. Here I am more interested in whether expression is *sufficient* for expressiveness.

It could be argued that all expressions are to some extent expressive,[36] insofar as all expressions reveal something about the emotion expressed. As Mitchell Green has

[34] This discussion has been brief and I ignore various complications. For example, I think that my account is most appropriate for works of art from the Romantic and post-Romantic traditions, but this is not surprising as it is such works that are normally held to be the most expressive as well as the most likely to count as expressions. Secondly, I have not discussed the implications of inappropriate expressiveness, where the emotion that an expressive work seems to want to evoke does not match the emotion expressed by the work. Thirdly, I have said very little about whether the emotions aroused by an expressive work are identical to or merely appropriate to what the work expresses. On this topic, see Matravers (1998) (however, Matravers is not working with the expression-expressiveness distinction I am advocating here). Fourthly, I have not discussed other ways in which an expressive expression might reveal something about the emotion expressed.

[35] And/or perhaps some other appropriate emotion.

[36] Berys Gaut pressed me on this point.

put it, a drawing of an angry face shows what human anger looks like, and a drawing of a sad face shows what human sadness looks like.[37] This is true however inexpressive the drawings may be. Even the smiley-face and the upside-down smiley-face tell us something, namely that the "person" depicted is happy or sad. But such expressions are only minimally expressive. Being an expression may be sufficient for minimal expressiveness, but what I want to emphasize is that it is possible for an expression to be extremely inexpressive. Thus a work of art can express the artist's love of cabbages in a singularly inexpressive way.

If we think of expressiveness as a matter of how clearly the emotion expressed is revealed in the expression, then even inexpressive expressions are to some small degree expressive. But if we insist that expressiveness is always a matter of revealing what is expressed *by evoking an (appropriate) emotional response* in other people, then there could be expressions that are not expressive at all, like the smiley-face and the hypothetical cabbage paintings.[38] Either way, however, there are works of art that are expressions having only minimal expressiveness, as well as expressive works of art that are not expressions of anyone's emotions.

Having said this, however, I believe that those works of art that are the richest and most archetypal works of artistic *expression* (although not necessarily the greatest works of art *simpliciter*), are works that are *both* genuine expressions of an emotion in author, implied author, narrator, or character, *and* are expressive to a very high degree. There is a genuine emotion genuinely expressed in a genuinely expressive way. I think of Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, and the paintings by Constable of the Stour Valley. Certainly this is what Collingwood meant by works of artistic *expression* (in his sense).

In conclusion, I'd like to comment briefly on two theories of musical expressiveness in the light of my distinction between expression and expressiveness. Stephen Davies and Jerrold Levinson have given rival definitions of *expressiveness* in music in terms of the concept of *expression.* According to Davies' theory of "appearance emotionalism," the expressiveness of a piece of music is "an objective and literally possessed but response-dependent property of that piece."[39] The response in question is "an experience of resemblance between the music and the realm of

[37] Paper presented to the American Society for Aesthetics at the American Philosophical Association Central Division meetings, Chicago, April 2005.
[38] I suspect there are also other ways in which expressive expressions can reveal what is expressed.
[39] Davies (2006), p. 180.

human emotion."[40] Further, "[t]he resemblance that counts most for musical expressiveness … is that between music's temporally unfolding dynamic structure and configurations of human behavior associated with the expression of emotion." For example, the development of music in various aspects "is like human behavior in that it seems purposeful and goal-directed." He goes on: "More particularly, music is expressive in recalling the gait, attitude, air, carriage, posture, and comportment of the human body."[41]

Davies says that music is heard as *expressive of emotion* by virtue of the *experience of resemblance* between "music's temporally unfolding dynamic structure" and "configurations of human behavior associated with expression of emotion." But if what I have said in this paper is correct, then experienced resemblance to people's behavior when they are expressing a certain emotion is never going to be sufficient for anything above a minimal level of expressiveness. As we've seen, some music that is sad or cheerful may resemble sad or cheerful behavior but in a boring predictable inexpressive way. To be expressive of an emotion requires more. I've suggested that it requires that the music reveals something of what that peculiar emotion is like by actually enabling us to feel (or to imagine feeling) that emotion.

Jerrold Levinson's definition of "musical expressiveness" makes no explicit reference to any resemblance between music and human behavior. According to Levinson,

> a passage P is expressive of an emotion E if and only if P, in context, is readily heard, by a listener experienced in the genre in question, as an expression of E. Since expressing requires an expresser, this means that in so hearing the music the listener is in effect committed to hearing an agent in the music – what we can call the music's *persona* – or to at least imagining such an agent in a backgrounded manner.[42]

But what Levinson has given us here is not an account of *expressiveness* in music but of *expression*. The theory explains – quite nicely, I think, in this latest formulation – how music in which there seems to be no agent and which is different in so many ways from usual modes of human expression like facial expressions or gestures nevertheless can function as an expression: we have to think of it as containing a

[40] Ibid. p. 181.
[41] Ibid. p. 182.
[42] Levinson (2006), p. 193.

persona who is expressing his or her emotions in the music. But again, this tells us little about *expressiveness.* True, we are unlikely to posit a persona in inexpressive boring music; nonetheless whether music is an *expression* does not determine whether it is *expressive*, above a certain minimal level.

In conclusion, the moral of the paper is that it behooves us to distinguish carefully between the two faces of Janus-faced expression and expressiveness and to recognize that although they can go together with marvelous effect, they are related but conceptually distinct phenomena.[43]

[43] Many thanks to Stephanie Ross and to the audience at the British Society for Aesthetics annual meeting (September 2007) for very useful comments.

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