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Sentimentality in the Suburban Ensemble Dramedy: A Response to Berlant's Optimism-Realism Binary

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Lauren Berlant has famously problematised the sense of communal belonging wrought by sentimental humanism, yet in so doing has presumed a binary between optimism and realism, and tendered new strictures on acceptable affect. In suburban ensemble cinema we find an alternate view: sentimentality as a place of transition, and a more complex taxonomy of human relationality.

Sentimentality has a long history in literary theory, and more recently writers including Lauren Berlant have extended its reach to media and film critique. Famously summarised by James Baldwin in 1955 as "the mask of cruelty" (14), the experience of sentimentality has earned a particularly poor reputation as being synonymous with bigotry. The philosophical underpinnings of sentiment – seeking higher truth in the internal, the bodily and meta-physiological, sensation and feeling – translated to a literary tradition that, to critics such as Baldwin and Berlant, has appeared to value self-congratulatory and self-justifying emotional excess, a means by which a privileged few were attributed the humanity of higher feeling (a more profound interiority, and connectedness through superior affect) at the expense of others. Berlant reinforces a contemporary conflation of humanism and sentimentality, using both as bywords for prejudice: "the critical literature on sentimentality has now long refused the appearance of apoliticism brandished by sentimental humanism, connecting it to racist, imperial, and exploitative alibis for control" (*The Female Complaint* 282).

On the other hand, in a 1999 article June Howard points up the shedding of sentiment's philosophical heritage of mutual empathy and emotional imagination:

> In postbellum America, the literary was often defined against sentimentality and the domestic culture of letters. Prestigious writing gradually and unevenly became less openly emotional and more ambitiously intellectual, less directly didactic and more conspicuously masculine. Antisentimentalism is an important part of that story, especially for literary studies. (73-74)

In its translation from philosophical doctrine to literary form, Howard argues that sentimentality was conflated with domesticity and the feminine. Any principled opposition to such a form then had to propose alternative authentic emotional states that sentiment could not reach; thus antisentimental analysts are still imposing hierarchies of acceptable affect.

A contemporaneous reappraisal of antisentimentalism can be witnessed in another unlikely source: a cluster of millennial American films I identify as "suburban ensemble dramedies", so called because of their alternating focalisation between characters of divergent generations, genders, sexualities, classes, races, and attitudes in a mutating suburban environment. In constantly shifting perspectives, the films also move us between satiric, realist and sentimental filmmaking modes, asking us to consider a greater range of affective possibilities in tension and in flux. Of these kaleidoscopic affects, sentimentality stands out as a significant place of transition – we move through sentimentality,

and it has purpose in both fortifying and broadening our field of community identification, responsibility and sympathy. I will be looking at some of the more popular suburban ensemble films, including *Little Miss Sunshine* (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 2006) and *The Kids Are All Right* (Lisa Cholodenko, 2010), as well as less heralded pictures such as *Little Children* (Todd Field, 2006) and *The Oranges* (Julian Farino, 2012). With some precursors, like *Parenthood* (Ron Howard, 1989) a decade earlier, the substantial success of *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) could arguably be seen as inaugurating this filmmaking trend.

In this article I will use the suburban ensemble film as a counterpoint to Berlant's comments on sentimentality and related ideals: specifically, this article questions the underlying assumption of a binary between optimism and realism, which much of Berlant's work relies on; her appropriation of terms from psychology, such as depressive realism; the elite third person effect of notions such as "the good life", and her lack of specificity regarding alternatives to the sentimental or cruelly optimistic, including the conditions of complicating one's identity in politically acceptable ways.[1]

Baldwin and Berlant voice a prevalent assumption in suggesting that sentimentality is somehow a defective response concealing conservative values or identity boundaries; however the proposition only remains true if we focus singularly on those stories which *do* reach conservative conclusions and ask us to bask uncritically in them. Indeed such films are not hard to find, and Berlant has extended the literary critique of sentimentality to cinema adapted from novels including *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Show Boat*, and the output of celebrities such as Shirley Temple. In *The Female Complaint*, Berlant analyses sentiment's social orderings and anatomises the conservative values that reinforce gender and class norms and protect privilege; it is also true, however, that for every Shirley Temple flick, there are examples of films encouraging a relational mutuality founded on respecting difference and striving for equality. Stoking sentiment, as we will see, is a means, a tool, not an end in itself. Surely it matters what the object of sentimentality is, what we are sentimental *about*. Berlant, however, suggests that even the most radical of these humanist narratives, upon reaching for sentimentality, allows us to relax into apoliticism and dismiss critiques of structural disadvantage, as the sense of relation and belonging they provide is rarefied and protected – blinding, even.

The development of a suburban ensemble dramedy mode in American filmmaking after *American Beauty* provides an interesting case study in the use of cinematic sentimentality for progressive thought: in such films the audience is rarely allowed to feel sentiment until a progressive conclusion is reached. Sentiment may allow us to feel comforted by a conviction, but if this conviction is that sometimes life is hard and surprises us, yet we can turn to our families and communities and look after one another for consolation or that we need to think generously about one another's misdemeanours and a breadth of different humanness, then is such an apparent pause in reflexivity doing anyone any damage?[2] Could we not instead call this kind of sharing 'consolidation' or 'solidarity'? It is impossible to live in a state of constant reflexivity, so if we are to share conviction through sentiment, which in effect asks us to relax into a mutual value (or what we imagine to be a mutual value in order to reinforce it), then the value itself should be assessed, not the notion that we may respond with sentiment in the first place.

Berlant assumes a binary between the idealism she locates in sentimentality and a depressive realism, which, she says, "in contrast, [is] more accurate" (Berlant, qtd. in McCabe). This is a dubious

fortification of a negative bias, extrapolating favourable self-diagnosis of a controversial psychological effect to generalised cultural theory, from which any pessimistic sociopolitical prognosis could be asserted as being "more accurate".[3] One may exhibit depressive realism, but one cannot *be* a depressive realist any more than a cultural theory can be buttressed as such. Further, Berlant continues to embody a tension between personally affected self-searching in works such as "Affect is the New Trauma", and her foundational condescension, particularly throughout *Cruel Optimism*: the latter in fact seems to imply that everyone except Berlant is trapped in a relational nightmare, not clever enough to recognise that their imaginary connections to people and things are at the same time aspirational-neoliberal fantasies of "the good life", and thus we are all engaged in some form of self-harm when we relate. The hostility toward coherent self-narratives as representative of normalisation, political certitude and lack of reflexivity locks us into a self-defeating lack of specificity about the structuring of our identities.[4] Yet since coherent self-narratives are unavoidable, valorising the state of identity upset in and of itself – ironically erecting new identity boundaries – merely permits us to be unclear about the conditions of identity flux and politicisation, about thoughts, actions, causes, and the way we transmit ideas about our selves through storied behaviours. [5] What exactly is it, we should ask, that we want from identity upset? Being specific regarding the *particular* values we should question is a humility that remains vulnerable and open to discovery, in a way that binaristic admonishments of others' sentimental optimism or masochistic fantasy of the good life cannot be. Berlant challenges us only to reimagine ourselves on this restrictive continuum – subject to or not subject to hopeful political narratives – and so I am doubtful Berlant manages to achieve this specificity.

The binary between sentimental idealism and depressive realism is imaginary. Brian Wilkie points out some of the classist undertones in these readings of the literary sentimental (570-71) and spins a neat analogy for thinking about elitist antisentimentalism, or the claim to an attitudinally superior cognitive bias in cultural analysis that is allegedly provided by depressive realism: "Sugar is as much a fact of life as vomit; one is a soft fact and one a hard one, if you will, but both are facts" (572). Similarly, David Foster Wallace uses expository passages in *Infinite Jest* to casually discard the discriminatory binary: "sentiment equals naïveté on this continent" (694). He goes on to facetiously connect an essential experience of being "really human" to the "unavoidably sentimental and naive and goo-prone" (694-95), at once sympathising with and satirising the presumed alternative to hip cynicism as unthinkingly sanguine affective stasis. If such a binary does exist, Wallace muses that sentiment is preferable (which at least skirts anhedonia), but this concept of humanness is clearly false and limiting. Note also the humour sitting alongside a drive to earnestness, honesty and realism in both Wilkie and Wallace's remarks, as this affective balancing act is an important component in the suburban ensemble dramedy that I will look at shortly. Most of the millennial suburban ensemble dramedies recognise that neither bias, focusing on one affective state and not the other, would be superior or more realistic – instead they illustrate the possibility of affective balance or equilibrium. Films such as *Little Miss Sunshine* or *The Kids Are All Right* use such recognition to their advantage, yoking human insight from the affective spectrum they are able to cover. *Little Miss Sunshine* features a family moving through rage, contempt, grief, sarcasm, scepticism, flippancy, cheer, hope, disappointment, love and sentimentality, yet they are permitted all such responses, as is the spectator. *The Kids Are All Right* features reflection on the heredity of bias to particular emotional states, as two children with lesbian

mothers meet their biological father, prompting consideration of the unknowable inheritance conditions, genetic and cultural, of varied personality traits and coping mechanisms.

Sentimentality, then, is not "unearned", to borrow a descriptor popularly attributed to James Joyce. These films use sentiment to find a place where we do not know exactly how to feel or what to think, as we could equally be laughing or crying, feeling shock or understanding, and embracing or rejecting characters and their actions. Screenwriters Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel have demonstrated this on a number of occasions, especially in *Parenthood* and their follow-up film *City Slickers* (Ron Underwood, 1991), which similarly portray sentimentality and humour as alternating coping mechanisms, their characters juggling negative and positive biases in dealing with crises both existential and physical. We feel the pull of emotional excess – sentiment – but it is charged with conflicting knowledge and feeling. This delicious tension, the space where we are not certain exactly what a film is eliciting from us because, in a kind of affective verisimilitude, its dynamism paves no correct response, is a curiously empowering place to be – it exists elsewhere in cinema too, from the horror comedy to the political romantic comedy. Here we can reach a zone of sanctioned affect where that affect is not prescriptive, and by stoking a lifelike confusion, we can think more generously, receptively and open-heartedly on the subject at hand.

More specifically, we need to scrutinise the grouping of repartee, oft-unkind riposte, and performance gags with genuine attempts at unpacking socio-ethical problems to comprehend the purposeful interlacing of drama and comedy in the suburban ensemble film. This could be seen as extended from the fluidity between social commentary, sarcastic jibe and demonstrations of familial care in the lineage of television sitcoms such as *Roseanne* through to *The Simpsons* and *Modern Family*. The tension between pathos and associated moments of bathos shows up both our attempts to dismiss that which troubles us with jest, and our impulse to become absorbed by our own woes. We are permitted both states, but encouraged not to remain too long with either condition, as we are prompted to use one to upset the other – to challenge affective inertia – in our search for answers to difficult ethical situations. The technique promotes a kind of sifting through affective responses to find what is appropriate, yet none are considered inadequate or incorrect, and all emotive responses are potentially useful in finding a way forward.

So sentimentality is not in and of itself an affective coherence. We can have an affective incoherence – an "incompatibility between conceptual and embodied affect" – in features that engage sentimentality (Semin and Smith 215). In fact, sentimentality before, after and alongside other emotive responses may increase the scope of the upset and reflexivity available, potentially even leading to a reduced reliance on stereotypes.[6] At the same time, as George McFadden argues, following Charles Mauron, affective incoherence nourishes laughter as the critical viewer wonders "how sense and nonsense are combined to make comedy, and what kind of adult behaviour correlates with the zany and outrageous activity on the stage" (156). Our affective experiences in narrative, however, should be recognised as separate from unmediated lived experience – we recognise a level of intentionality in emotional cues, so we might refer to *attempts to achieve* the state of affective incoherence in art by another term: a challenge to affective inertia, or a call to affective mobility. Again, we should look at sentimentality as a tool or device that can be put to use in this capacity, and not merely as a generic code (which might in any case more accurately be called melodrama).

As just one example, many of these films demonstrate how anger can be a force for positive change – as long as we do not indulge its permanency. *The Oranges* stands out here, repositioning as redemptive possibility the antagonism of people we might otherwise scorn as immoral – in this case an adulterous, intergenerational couple whose affair spurs family and friends to reimagine their own lives. Sentiment is just one of the responses we move through to patch together our best moral resolution. *The Oranges* makes counterintuitive use of a gentle, pensive, acoustic score at moments of expected melodrama and audience disparagement, and its focalisation shifts between characters of differing perspectives; later we learn how the indiscretions of some characters have productive effects on others. The couple's exploration of moral ambiguities justifiably enrages those implicated, yet ultimately moves everyone along a continuum of affect – including laughter, attempts at deflating their torment, and sentimentality, allowing them to access redefined communal attachments and potentialities. Without moving through anger, they may not desire change; without levity, they may remain in depression or the inertia of resentment; without sentiment, they may refuse to work together to revise relational responsibilities. This process allows them to attach to a new life less complacent and more fulfilling than before. The perspectives on anger offered by the suburban ensemble dramedy, though, are far from homogenous. *Junebug* (Phil Morrison, 2005) and *City Island* (Raymond De Felitta, 2009), for instance, look at anger arising from class friction, and conflicting demonstrations of belonging required by different communities, families and locales (semi-rural suburbia in North Carolina or the Bronx's City Island, for example).

Problematic as the community may be in identity politics and Berlantian queer theory, as all community entails some kind of exclusion, Darwinian humanists such as Ellen Dissanayake suggest that such problems cannot be used to dismiss inextricably human impulses:

> … we evolved to need mutuality with other individuals, acceptance by and participation in a group, socially shared meanings, assurance that we understand and can capably deal with the world, and the opportunity to demonstrate emotional investment in important objects and outcomes by acts and experiences of elaborating. (168)

In denying these human needs, we risk devising an unworkable and self-defeating ethic to live by, thereby proffering dissatisfaction and disappointment.[7] We imagine ourselves as ethically bound to a community in order to reach mutually inclusive goals. This can apply to a cosmopolitan communal adherence too. These films position sentiment not just as mutuality, but as an important part of our communal governance, diplomacy or decision-making processes, which can lead to outcomes of care for *a broader spectrum* of otherness, and certainly do not preclude ethical or political action – this is realised in philosophy and deed by all of the protagonists at the conclusion of *Little Children*, for example.[8] Vigilante ex-cop Larry Hedges (Noah Emmerich) realises he has a duty of care to Ronnie McGorvey (Jackie Earle Haley) when he discovers that Ronnie has attempted self-castration following struggles with paedophilic desire, stigma, and the death of his mother; and a couple involved in an adulterous affair, Brad Adamson (Patrick Wilson) and Sarah Pierce (Kate Winslet), must confront the inherent self-absorption of their elopement plans, stemming from a belief that they have missed out on earlier formative experiences, and reclaim a wider sense of belonging and accountability. Often the sentimental component of these films is focused on mutual redemption, a political awakening into a new communal care: the characters' comprehension of their interdependence helps them reconstruct

their identities to be more broadly considerate of others. Dan P. McAdams's research looks at how narratives of redemption promote generativity – in fact, he suggests such narratives are integral to maintaining generative values beyond the present self (82). "High scores on generativity measures," he writes, "are positively associated with indexes of prosocial behaviour and productive societal engagements," which include "interest in political issues and involvement in the political process" (84). The sentimentality of personal redemption within a community – in which we come to care more about community – may help shape our behaviour in positive ways, whether or not it is founded on a mythical, optimistic or entirely imaginary public.

If we reach a point of sentimentality in a narrative of social inclusion, however, we may ask whether the imagined intimate norm we arrive at, the recognisable conventionality the device relies on, and those who are excluded by omission or subtle disassociation, render such a narrative ineffectual in changing an exploitative status quo, or positions it above and beyond more active political concerns. So we must ask whether, as audiences, "they" (Berlant uses the third person to describe such audiences) are even allowed to feel closer to others when they, as Berlant says:

> … take emotions to express something authentic about themselves that they think the world should welcome and respect; a mode constituted by affective and emotional intelligibility and a kind of generosity, recognition, and solidarity among strangers. Another way to say this is that I am interested in a realist account of fantasy, insofar as the political and the social are floated by complex and historically specific affective investments. (Berlant, qtd. in McCabe)

Although this is, on the surface, a good description of the relational experience of sentimentality, it is accompanied by some specious correlational reasoning – that sharing values or imagining the communal around those values necessarily constitutes a fantasy (in the psychoanalytic sense), and cannot be concomitant with political reflexivity. Berlant has identified feelings of belonging as part of the problem that sustains political imbalance and class unconsciousness, arguing that it is concurrent with unheeded exploitation. However, belonging is part of everything we do: it is an intrinsic condition of human sociality. Exploitation, however, is different – there are periods, places, thoughts and actions that have varying degrees of exploitation, so it must be subject to change. The need for belonging is everywhere in equal measure, in intimate publics as in cosmopolitan fealties. As Frans de Waal notes:

> Individual interests may be served by partnerships (e.g., marriages, friendships) that create a long-lasting communal "fitness interdependence" mediated by mutual empathy. Within these relationships, partners do not necessarily keep careful track of who did what for whom (Clark & Mills 1979), and derive psychological and health benefits not only from receiving but also from giving support (Brown & Brown 2006). (292)

Thus belonging is positively correlated with health outcomes. Once again, as in much post-Foucauldian political theory, the identification of a human problem (in this case reconciling community fealty with altruistic political action) is given as evidence to dismiss an entire enterprise, to dismiss striving – perhaps because problem recognition alone, without hope, is intellectual power. This is, in fact, the difficulty of progressivity per se: there are indeed human organisational quandaries and atrocities, so those who restate such problems will always be correct; those who submit the optimism of a solution remain subject to those who defer to the known challenges. Negative realism as philosophy – and as

some kind of antidote to plebeian cruel optimism – matches the miserablist fatalism of the mainstream news cycle, and in the process renders itself ineffectual.

For Berlant, the sentimental inspires an imagined group cohesion which is bigoted, oppressive or incorrectly aspirational, but to sustain this view we must resist recognition of the many different ways we can imagine ourselves as akin to others: group identification is different from identity fusion, which is in turn different from tolerance, and surely there are many more social glues.[9] All of these recognised varieties of communal identity construction, and the spaces in between them, may be the object of sentiment, and may drive compassionate behaviours.

Harvey Whitehouse's work makes an important distinction between group identification and identity fusion, encompassing different levels of personal accountability felt to others, and different activations of self-identity. Blending all kinds of group cohesion and identification into a single problematic process without scientific recourse is a dangerous route to simplifying, and thereby dehumanising the ways people operate together. A spectrum of degrees of adhesion to social identities and fused groups should also be recognised across local experience and extended imaginings, and shared ideology does not necessarily have to follow from either cohesion, especially with extended fusions (in Berlant, imagined publics). Whitehouse writes:

> Recall that one of the hypothesized features of local fusion is that personal experience, on which my sense of self is at least partly constructed, provides the main reference point for sharing a common bond. So extended fusion would seem to be a more tentative kind of fusion of self and other. Since it depends on external sources as well as direct personal engagement (e.g. testimony rather than experience) it carries less conviction. (286)

This could also translate to ideological conviction. Although we see strong methods for generating a fusion by which we might favour peers in a large anonymous grouping – such as routinised doctrinal rituals – it does not necessarily follow that we will all adopt the same *values* in any grouping (consider the breadth of dispositions even among one's immediate family), so we may be looking in the wrong place if we are to politicise communities and imagined publics to this extent. Communities can be established by interaction rather than shared ideology, which should be seen as a set of behaviours constituting a kind of community self-governance that crucially complements state and market, as Bowles and Gintis argue; and communities can exist even without the perception of relationality or commonality, as Robert J. Sampson explains ("Collective Efficacy Theory" 153). Although we still see social groups influencing values and neighbourhood effects in ideological contagion, it seems that contact with peers is still key. As in Nicholas A. Christakis's "Three Degrees of Influence" theory of social influence outlined in *Connected*, the attitudinal and behavioural contagion we exhibit is reduced with each degree of separation from direct contact. No modelling of community per se *mandates* shared values or privilege, so we cannot assume imagined communities control the genesis of political attitudes.

Tolerance is another kind of group cohesion in which we neither identify with nor aggress against an out-group, and thus encompasses a kind of communal responsibility without affinity. In his analysis of the development of D.W. Griffith's film language, James Chandler suggested at a 2014 symposium on sentiment that "the sentimental mode mediates the melodramatic content", representing distance from one's own internality and closeness to another's, provided by sympathetic

face-to-face connection. In this way the sentimental and sympathetic modes work together to prevent us from adopting one internal affective environment as we focus on the space between the characters, their context, their different perception and their striving to overcome the space between them (interceding the intimate affective immobility of melodrama). We find here another potential space for affective equilibrium in continuous upset of sole emotional identification. In this way the new language could *embody* Griffith's concept of tolerance (overtly stated in the title cards for 1916's *Intolerance*): if one has a differing view to our own, we do not necessarily adopt her or his view through sympathetic engagement, but at the same time we would not think of her or him as inhuman or evil. However, as we have seen, melodrama is just one device used in the suburban ensemble dramedy; its hyperbolic machinations are always mediated by the perceptual biases of other affective modes surrounding it.

Suggesting an excess beyond the detail of cohesion we have so far been able to gather data on, Whitehouse also mentions that:

> While individuals are only capable of fusing with a small number of groups (typically two or three at most), it is possible to identify with a great many different groups. This means we can build a complex division of labour in which we shift flexibly between roles as changing social situations dictate. There is no limit on the size of groups with whom identification is possible. (288)

For some, group cohesion appears to be *the* problem, but for others with perhaps more faith in the concurrence of local community fealty and political cosmopolitanism, a fair scientific deconstruction of the diversity of human group identification may suggest opportunities for reducing civil and global conflicts, poverty and exclusion.[10]

Thus, even though some community fealties may be problematic, this should not mean that all of our communal behaviours are – even some exclusionary social groupings are impossible to avoid, and some condoned ostracism is necessary to live: ignoring strangers on public transport, for example, is not without purpose. But this does not mean we will refuse ethical responsibilities to others outside of our social circles. The strictures on social grouping and how we think about our social groupings are therefore inadequate philosophies. Even if Berlant accepts a version of communal belonging, this level of debate cannot tell us what conditions of belonging make our relationality acceptable; thus we are all prescribed a suspicion of our inherent and varied attachments to others. Sentimentality, then, if it allows us to feel comforted by feelings of connection to others in our community, is not the problem. However we can still ask if conceiving of oneself as "special" because of these feelings is reasonable: a number of urban ensemble dramedies, such as *Margaret* (Kenneth Lonergan, 2011) and the films of Nicole Holofcener, actively ask this question.

It seems that, working within this stringency, no one is allowed to feel comforted by any qualities they share with others without risking being immediately denigrated as participating in normalisation, fantasy or falsehood. Anything we locate as mutual becomes conventional and thereby abhorrently compromising. I conclude that this is an unfair condition to saddle viewers and readers with. The ethic proposed by Berlant constitutes, paradoxically, another attempt to restrict parts of our identity – in this case our affective identity – for ideological reasons that spuriously relate to how we actually treat one another.

To summarise, we can see sentimentality as a device rather than having intrinsic ethical value. The communities we may attach ourselves to via sentiment are not merely imaginary; communities also constitute behaviours we exhibit to one another. The need for belonging is a pancultural phenomenon and cannot be realistically appraised as a surmountable problem. Further, identifying with members of one's community does not necessarily mean we will not exhibit kindness or ethical inclusivity to out-group members. The use of sentiment in stories, in acknowledging a breadth of otherness, may also work to *extend* our cosmopolitan actions by humanising others, and encourages us to find points of ethical identification with and commitment to a broader range of living entities. Berlantian affect theory needlessly restricts identities and attitudes that do not translate to political or compromising actions, and can thus be seen as arguably prejudicial. A third person effect is also discernible: the philosophy applies to the relationality of others, but not the writer's, and is thus elitist.

Comprehending how the suburban ensemble film appropriates sentimental experience allows us to access an alternative to Berlant's political-affective binaries. The affective spectrum covered in the suburban ensemble dramedy permits concurrent diverse emotions in tension with associated ideas and attitudes, and opens up a place to truly consider how we might behave *given* our troubled relationships with peers.

Notes

[1] I refer to this notion as "identity upset" hereafter.

[2] This is a behaviour, not a relation with an "imagined" or "imagined intimate" public, as Berlant argues, referring to Benedict Anderson's concept of the "imagined community".

[3] See Moore and Fresco (2012) for a meta-analysis.

[4] At times Berlant self-defensively refers to her own social analysis as "incoherent", as in the alternatives-that-aren't-alternatives in "A Properly Political Concept of Love" (685-86).

[5] Perhaps this could also be seen as an extension of Jean-François Lyotard's "incredulity towards metanarratives" to a livable ethic.

[6] As suggested by Jeffrey R. Huntsinger's 2013 research, "Affective Incoherence Reduces Reliance on Activated Stereotypes".

[7] Of the kind Berlant, in *Cruel Optimism*, seeks to avoid.

[8] C.f. Bowles and Gintis, "Social Capital and Community Governance".

[9] For example, Lakin et al., "The Chameleon Effect as Social Glue"; Bastian et al., "Pain as Social Glue"; Van Vugt and Hart, "Social Identity as Social Glue".

[10] This is what Whitehouse suggests in "Three Wishes for the World".

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Wyatt Moss-Wellington is a PhD student at The University of Sydney. In 2012, he completed an MA thesis on the cinema of John Sayles. Research interests include humanistic filmmaking, cine-ethics, social realism, literary Darwinism and social narratology. Moss-Wellington has also worked as a progressive folk musician, a film industry public relations consultant, and entertainment journalist.