Cinema of the Dark Side
Atrocity and the Ethics of Film Spectatorship

Shohini Chaudhuri
Contents

Acknowledgements iv
List of Figures viii

Introduction 1
1 Documenting the Dark Side: Fictional and Documentary Treatments of Torture and the ‘War On Terror’ 22
2 History Lessons: What Audiences (Could) Learn about Genocide from Historical Dramas 50
3 The Art of Disappearance: Remembering Political Violence in Argentina and Chile 84
4 Uninvited Visitors: Immigration, Detention and Deportation in Science Fiction 115
5 Architectures of Enmity: the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict through a Cinematic Lens 146
Conclusion 178

Bibliography 184
Index 197
Introduction

In the science fiction film *Children of Men* (2006), set in a future dystopian Britain, a propaganda film plays on a TV screen on a train. Images of disasters and atrocities around the world appear in a rapid-fire parody of TV news headlines. The news consists entirely of bad things happening to other people in other places. The apocalyptic montage climaxes as Big Ben chimes over the headline ‘Only Britain soldiers on’.

In today’s world, atrocity images circulate with apparent ease and instantaneousness via 24-hour TV news, the Internet and mobile phone cameras. Yet mainstream news remains strictly regulated, by considerations of not only what is ‘acceptable’ for public viewing but also what is ‘newsworthy’ and friendly to government interests. Though terrorism at home and abroad frequently makes the headlines, mainstream Western news media often present atrocities overseas as unfortunate but inevitable, directly emanating from the region’s troubled history or geography. News reports provide brief, remote glimpses seemingly disconnected from their viewers, and therefore easily accepted as background to their lives, highlighting the disparity between those who watch and those who suffer. Through decisions of selection, prioritisation, inclusion and exclusion, the news helps to shape an ‘imagined picture’ of the world (Calhoun 2010: 33).

This book is a comparative study of 21st-century cinematic images of atrocity. It asserts that cinema can counter the desensitising impact of such news images. It finds its immediate historical and political context in the post-9/11 climate, when global terrorism has become a universal fear and concern. But rather than the terrorism of groups such as Al-Qaeda, which is promoted as the prime threat to human life by Western governments and news media, its focus is the cinematic treatment of state terror, which routinely destroys many more lives through the arms trade, aerial bombardment, enforced disappearance, torture, genocide and population displacements, resulting in an unstable,
asymmetric world that this book interprets not as a natural division (the West versus ‘the rest’) but as a legacy of colonial histories maintained by present-day politics.

National security is frequently offered as a justification for state terror, but this conceals other agendas at work, namely promoting the interests of elites which, for Western democracies, are intertwined with ensuring the free flow of capital in order to maintain their power and influence in the world. Though the USA has primacy in the global capitalist system, other powerful states share similar competitive interests, while their client states also benefit from this system: a form of neo-imperialism following similar aims and methods to older colonialisms characterised by resource extraction and labour exploitation and enforced by a rule of terror which crushed rebellions through torture and collective punishments. As the work of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky and Mark Curtis has shown, massive human rights violations are committed in pursuit of these agendas. For these writers, the media perform the role of ‘perception management’ (Curtis 2004: 101), which projects powerful groups as moral forces for good and keeps their agendas partially hidden so as to ‘manufacture consent’ (Herman and Chomsky 2002).

Cinema occupies part of this broader media landscape, disseminating images that construct how we think and feel about atrocities. Films help to shape prevailing normative perceptions, but they can also question those perceptions and build different ones. This book seeks to use film to interrogate aspects of geopolitical realities. In its analysis, it points towards to a new conceptualisation of human rights cinema in which human rights morality is repositioned within an ethical framework that reflects upon the causes and contexts of atrocities, and invites viewers to question their own relation to those histories.

A few days after 9/11, US Vice-President Dick Cheney declared: ‘We also have to work . . . the dark side.’ This provides the book’s central metaphor. A portent of what was to come, Cheney’s words hinted at the dirty tactics that the USA (along with its allies) has come to refer to and justify as a global ‘War on Terror’ – which encompasses everything from conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq to kidnappings, torture and targeted killings by drones and special forces. The metaphor of the dark side, originating from Star Wars (1977), positions the USA as a force for good, legitimating the unleashing of the darkest forces to battle a new, ruthless enemy. The ‘dark side’ is not a new phenomenon, however, as it is shaped by and echoes past forms of violence from the Cold War back to colonial history.

This book takes a transnational approach in its study of cinematic images of state-sponsored atrocity in the shadow of these post-9/11 developments, using them to evoke other landscapes of state terror and allow connections to emerge across multiple contexts. While films are often about national histories,
this book is not about their negotiation of particular national pasts. Rather, it reveals links between histories that might not otherwise be apparent and meanings that risk being exclusively considered within the confines of national cinema studies. The book’s transnational scope enables thematic comparisons, as well as highlighting the role of film production and distribution in determining which atrocities we know about and the kinds of knowledge that are produced.

Most films discussed in the book, either through their production or distribution arrangements or through their narrative styles, belong to the mainstream – what might be called popular world cinema. This includes some films that are not ‘obvious’ human rights films, among them the science fiction films covered in Chapter 4. The book analyses a necessarily limited but diverse range of films to show that the topic merits different approaches. Even relatively mainstream films are capable of challenging dominant perceptions, thereby throwing into relief the far larger number of films that don’t.

The rest of this Introduction highlights the various critical discourses with which the book engages, firstly drawing on film theory and critical theory to show what have been perceived as some of the ethical problems raised by human rights representations. This book is invested in human rights activism and film studies debates on the ethics of spectatorship, yet it also seeks to challenge some of the orthodoxies of both these discourses. In film studies debates, those orthodoxies include the emphasis on Brechtian aesthetics, the dynamics of the gaze, trauma, and Levinasian ethics. The Introduction then outlines the concepts of the image, ethics and politics that define my approach, grouping these into three sections: reflection on causes and contexts of atrocity, a reconfigured framework of morality and ethics, and embodied spectatorship.

HUMAN RIGHTS REPRESENTATIONS AND THE ETHICS OF SPECTATORSHIP: PROBLEMS AND DEBATES

Human rights organisations and activists have long recognised the power of film for evidence, advocacy and awareness-raising. A film can offer personal stories and background, making human rights ‘tangible by eyewitness experience’ (Claude and Weston 2006: xii). Films are frequently used as part of human rights campaigns and, since the 1990s, a film festival network specialising in human rights has mushroomed worldwide. A definition of the human rights film is offered by the Charter of the Human Rights Film Network, a consortium of human rights film festivals established in 2004: ‘Human rights films, in our view, are films that reflect, inform on and provide understanding of the actual state of past and present human rights violations, or the visions
and aspirations concerning ways to redress those violations’ (Human Rights Film Network n.d.). At the heart of activists’ use of film is the belief that, by exposing human rights abuses around the world, film can bring about change or prevention: a belief in cinema’s transformative power to break through spectators’ ignorance, indifference or denial. The assumption is that representation promotes recognition, which, in turn, promotes the responsibility to act. Yet, as Jacques Rancière reminds us, though a film may open up new possibilities for politicisation, there is ‘no straight path’ from viewing to ‘understanding of the state of the world, and none from intellectual awareness to political action’ (2010: 143). Nor can you simply counter biased opinions with a statement of facts.

Activist use of film is mostly concerned with content: post-screening panel discussions at human rights film festivals, for example, are dominated by the issues raised by a film, rather than its aesthetic choices. This overlooks the relationship between form and content, and between film and its institutional contexts. These are precisely the focus of film studies debates, which problematise some of the major assumptions of human rights, including its ideal of ‘witnessing’.

Film famously played a role as a witness when it was used (for the first time) as legal evidence at the Nuremberg trials. Footage of Nazi camps shot by US and Soviet film crews was used as irrefutable proof that those atrocities had occurred (Delage and Goodrich 2013: 3). Watching is integral to human rights monitoring and its forms of collective activism, as signalled by names of organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Witness. The latter, one of several institutions that provide filmmaking equipment and training to people whose rights are at risk, is renowned for the slogan ‘See it, film it, change it’. The ethos behind human rights witnessing is that ‘seeing is believing’, creating the impression that all you have to do is get a camera, record abuses, and get the images ‘out there’.

Film studies has a different stance towards the activity of watching. Here, a central preoccupation has been ‘Who is looking at whom and how?’ (Downing and Saxton 2010: 20). Feminist critiques of cinema have traditionally centred on the objectifying male gaze and the voyeuristic character of film spectatorship, since film indulges a desire to look from a privileged vantage-point, without being seen ourselves. The visual gaze is associated with mastery and control, as in concepts of the male gaze and the imperial gaze (Mulvey 1989; Pratt 1992). This has led to an emphasis on the dynamics of the gaze in debates on the ethics of spectatorship. For example, Libby Saxton explores the motif of the view through the spyhole into Holocaust gas chambers, which necessitates a camera placement that aligns us with a Nazi: a sadistic-voyeuristic subject position, like the spyhole shot in Schindler’s List (1993), where naked Jewish women are glimpsed in their abject terror. It implies, she says, an illu-
sion of mastery and control over ‘a vulnerable on-screen other who can neither return our gaze nor acquiesce in our looking’ (Saxton 2008: 75).

Sophia Wood (2012) has argued that although atrocity films, including Nazi camp footage, appear to position spectators as ‘witnesses’, they also position us as voyeurs of other people’s suffering. For her, the discourse of ‘witnessing’ is a pretext for voyeurism. To assert that images purporting to bear witness perpetuate another kind of violence is a common rhetorical move. Many critical accounts insist that we shouldn’t look at atrocity images – instead, we should look away – or that some images shouldn’t be shown. However, these questions of propriety and limits belong to the domain of morality rather than ethics (for the distinction between morality and ethics, see below).

Despite the disparity between the human rights discourse of witnessing and film theories of the gaze, one concern that they share is how to break viewers’ assumed passivity or indifference in order to rouse them into action, particularly in the Brechtian model of spectatorship frequently invoked in arguments for a more politically or ethically progressive cinema. Brechtian self-reflexivity fosters critical distance from representations and provides audiences with moments to reflect on their roles as witnesses. For Michele Aaron, a self-reflexive film like *Funny Games* (1997) reminds spectators of their investment in watching ‘unconscionable’ content, holding them ‘accountable’ for it (Aaron 2007: 89, 118), while Saxton identifies films that ‘disturb the voyeuristic-sadistic gaze’, offering ‘alternative viewing positions’ that promote ‘more responsible and self-conscious ways of looking’ (Saxton 2008: 22, 73).

While these film scholars raise important issues, reminding us that there is no neutral position from which we look, the Brechtian model presents a number of assumptions that are critiqued in this book: that the spectator is by default passive, that emotions are antithetical to critical reflection, and that cinematic identification is solely based on optical point of view. As adopted into film theory, the Brechtian model offers a purely cerebral notion of spectatorship that neglects its embodied aspects and results in critics judging merely a handful of films to be capable of generating meaningful effects.

In the arena of human rights film, documentary is the privileged genre, due to its ‘emphasis on “truth”’ (Torchin 2012b: 2), stemming from belief in the camera’s truth-value as well as in the transparency of this evidence. A similar preoccupation with film’s access to ‘truth’ or empirical reality underlies film theory. For André Bazin (1967), what distinguishes cinema from other art forms is its ‘objectivity’, derived from the photographic medium’s ability to capture reality through an indexical link to real-world objects. But the camera is not just a recording apparatus; it is also a means of expression. A film, whether documentary or otherwise, is never objective; it is always partial and selective, offering a set of perspectives or perceptions on reality. As Linda Williams writes, ‘the truth figured by documentary cannot be a simple
unmasking or reflection. It is a careful construction, an intervention in the politics and the semiotics of representation’ (1993: 20).

Truth-telling is demanded by testimony, usually a first-person narrative relating suffering and injustice. In Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s account of Holocaust testimony, the endeavour to bear witness is marked by impossibility. In their well-known statement, the Holocaust is an ‘event without a witness’, meaning that not only were the bulk of its witnesses exterminated, but the experience traumatically dislocated survivors’ memories (Felman and Laub 1991: 80). The paradox of this discourse of trauma as testimony is that the ‘truthfulness’ of the victim’s account lies precisely in its dislocation, evidence that the traumatic subject has ‘contaminated’ its mode of narration.

The notion that historical trauma induces a crisis of representation has generated prevalent discourses of unrepresentability or inadequacy of representation. The trauma paradigm is indebted to Cathy Caruth’s work (1995), itself inspired by Felman and Laub as well as by studies of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Its widespread influence is evident in scholarly writing that explores how cinematic cultures work through traumatic pasts, often mapping historical trauma onto the exclusive concerns of national identity and the national cinema that is their specialist subject of study.

While recognition of traumatic realities for victims of historical atrocities is undoubtedly important, this book breaks with the trauma paradigm, which it finds problematic for a number of reasons. In its inward focus on victimised subjectivity, trauma reduces the significance of events to the history of specific individuals or a group. This prevents interrogation of the larger issues of why those events happened, which would situate them in a longer history of structures of violence. Trauma interprets violence through a subjective logic that can render a conflict’s political background unintelligible. Moreover, a PTSD diagnosis can be given to perpetrators, who claim they suffered too. While, as I argue in the chapters to follow, the perpetrator’s perspective can be illuminating of the ‘atrocity-producing situation’, there is a danger that films can assist in the cultural process of turning perpetrators into victims by adopting a post-traumatic mode of narration. The trauma paradigm is further problematic because it expects artworks to reflect a model of traumatised subjectivity, thereby valorising a specific canon of works that ‘bear witness’ to the ‘unrepresentable’, as elaborated in Chapter 2.

In the Latin American genre of testimonio, we find more politicised notions of testimony as a narrative seeking political justice, denouncing a current oppression or setting straight the official historical record (Yúdice 1996: 44). The book draws on this understanding of testimony as acknowledging histories of violence and countering official and cultural denial about their extent and impact. The literature around this genre also usefully emphasises
Introduction

how testimonio requires an interlocutor, in this case, the filmmaker, who helps transmit the account to an audience.

The fact that marginalised voices depend on those in authority to be given a platform forces us to recognise that images and other testimonies don’t speak for themselves, despite their apparent immediacy. They depend on rhetorical strategies and delivery contexts: the filmmakers’ choices of subject, perspective, aesthetics and intended audience; the circuits of distribution and exhibition, including factors of access and gatekeepers; and audiences, who approach films with their own interpretative choices and unpredictable responses (Hesford 2011; Torchin 2012a). These inform the articulation of truth claims and shape response. Though the Internet has offered new opportunities for distribution and exposure, enabling anyone to upload their films and share them with world audiences, attention still needs to be directed to those films.

Often it is a privileged filmmaker who ‘speaks’ on behalf of an oppressed subject, while self-representation, though ‘an important form of self-agency’, can be entangled in the same ‘global politics of recognition and economic distribution’ (Hesford 2011: 155).

Human rights images draw on a powerful but often problematic iconography of suffering intended to move spectators to compassion, giving ‘exemplary’ victims, such as women, children and the elderly, prominent status. According to Wendy Hesford, the field of human rights has not yet substantially engaged in a critical way with ‘the visual rhetorics of recognition, identification, witnessing, and agency that inform its practice’ (2011: 191). Her term ‘human rights spectacle’ comprises a variety of image-making practices, from NGO campaign materials to independent documentary films depicting war, genocide, rape, gender inequality, poverty and illness in other (non-Western) parts of the world. In order to generate viewer sympathy or empathy, Hesford claims, these deploy a visual rhetoric that perpetuates repressive Western ideologies, maintaining power relations over victims in a way that does not benefit them. Western viewers are interpolated as benevolent rescuers, like present-day civilising missions, repeating the colonial view of other societies as repressive or barbaric. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988) has criticised the characterisation of Third World women as passive victims waiting to be ‘saved’. Hesford makes a similar point about images of endangered children, represented in a way that denies them any agency.

Though they are distinct and developed separately, human rights (which are meant to protect individuals from state power and domination) and humanitarianism (a movement dedicated to alleviating others’ suffering) have become increasingly intertwined. Both have been co-opted by powerful states to justify their neo-imperialistic enterprises. As Slavoj Žižek (2005) observes, ‘human rights’ has become the ideology of military intervention in countries where economic and strategic interests are at stake. Military intervention
on humanitarian grounds – labelled ‘the military-humanitarian complex’ (Douzinas 2007: 64) – results in many further human rights violations, contradicting claims of ‘protecting’ civilian populations.

Both contemporary politics and human rights representations play on what Luc Boltanski (1999) calls the ‘politics of pity’, a phrase borrowed from Hannah Arendt (1990), and contrasted by both of them with a more favourable ‘politics of justice’. Media images of distant suffering tend to evoke indignation against perpetrators, sympathy with victims and their benefactors, or aesthetic contemplation – positions that, with the exception of aesthetic contemplation (which has other problems), are more or less hypocritical. As Susan Sontag says, ‘so far as we feel sympathy, we feel we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence’ (2003: 91). Driven by a fantasy of benevolence, self-piety or even schadenfreude, these forms of compassion create a separation between oneself and the situation of the oppressed; this is why, Sontag suggests, neither compassion nor outrage can direct a course of action.

‘Compassion fatigue’ is seen as a prevalent phenomenon and problem by charities, filmmakers and journalists, hence the demand for ever more sensationalist images (Moeller 1999). In her work on atrocity photography, Barbie Zelizer makes the point that we rely on the media to bear witness to atrocity, yet its extensive coverage has not prevented atrocities from recurring. The claim that we do not know what is happening cannot be made today, as it was with regard to Nazi atrocities, as evidence is constantly before us through ubiquitous atrocity images (Zelizer 1998: 203). One reason why we react indifferently to contemporary atrocities, Zelizer argues, is the use of the Holocaust as an interpretive framework. Images of contemporary atrocities recycle iconic Holocaust images, such as gaunt faces behind barbed wire and corpses piled in open graves. Repetition of the same sorts of image makes them familiar, no longer shocking, and neutralises our capacity to attend to the specificities of both the Holocaust and current atrocities, which are turned into generic, universal phenomena like ‘a mass burial, a shower, a survivor’ (ibid.: 14, original emphasis). By this means, photography accomplishes the opposite of what was intended, ‘atrocity’s normalization’ (ibid.: 212). What has occurred is a severing of the link between bearing witness and responsibility – we remember in order to forget.

Holocaust imagery has become part of the genre iconography of films about other historical atrocities, as Madeleine Hron (2012) has analysed in her study of Rwandan genocide films. Cinematic images create parallels between different atrocities, recalling Zelizer’s statement ‘Collectively held images . . . act as signposts, directing people who remember to preferred meanings by the fastest route’ (1998: 7). I am struck by how the famous photograph of the boy in the Warsaw Ghetto recurs in films about different contexts; it appears in both Hotel Rwanda (2004) and Waltz with Bashir (Vals Im Bashir, 2008), for example (see
Chapters 2 and 5). Originally a Nazi trophy photograph, it now designates injustices of various kinds, suggesting that images gain as well as lose meaning when they are recirculated. My film analysis points to a different reading of ‘signposting’, especially in the science fiction films in Chapter 4, where imaginative links are made between normalised present-day forms of violence and past violence. This signposting is often used critically to highlight ‘family resemblances’ between different types of violence – how they share some features in common, while others are different: similarities rather than equivalences.¹

Theodor Adorno proclaimed in 1949 that ‘to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric’, a statement often interpreted as a ban on all representations of atrocity (1981: 34). Yet, as he clarifies in a later reformulation in his *Negative Dialectics*, silence is not an alternative. Here, Adorno announces that Hitler has imposed a ‘new categorical imperative . . . upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen’ (1973: 65).² This is a perspective that I hold to be compatible with this book’s aim of demonstrating that cinema has a role in making ethical comparisons between different historical atrocities. Yet, it is from thinkers like Adorno that we have inherited the belief that popular culture, including cinema, suppresses critical thinking and that film, from the outset, trivialises any serious topic it might approach, thwarting attempts at fostering critical thought and resistance (Adorno 2000: 168). Here is his statement on genocide representation:

The so-called artistic representation of the sheer physical pain of people beaten to the ground by rifle butts contains, however remotely, the power to elicit enjoyment out of it . . . When genocide becomes part of the cultural heritage in the themes of committed literature, it becomes easier to continue to play along with the culture which gave birth to murder. (Adorno 1982: 312)

The worry is that representations of violence mimic violence, or aestheticise it, transfiguring it into a beautiful and thrilling spectacle. Similar arguments are made about films – that they glamorise atrocity by their meticulous depiction of it, undercutting their own human rights ‘message’. What most debates about the aestheticisation of violence miss, however, is that *all* images aestheticise, mediate, transform. A non-aestheticising alternative does not exist; rather, the question is how images transform.

Numbing or perverse pleasure, the two types of inappropriate response to atrocity images identified by critics, can result from particular aesthetic choices. Let me demonstrate this through a scene in *The Matrix* (1999), where Neo and Trinity enter a high-security building, dressed in black trenchcoats and sunglasses, armed to the teeth. Firing a torrent of bullets, they stride past
security guards, killing hordes of them. This is presented to us through the familiar conventions of screen violence: slow motion, rapid cutting and a rock soundtrack, with little focus on the victims and a great deal of focus on Neo and Trinity’s heroism and cool glamour – as Alison Young has pointed out (2010: 26), their violence is justified as morally righteous. All this creates a viewing experience that generates pleasurable identification with violence, so that we do not realise that what we are watching is actually a massacre.

Through their aesthetic strategies, filmmakers make decisions about whose death and suffering should be acknowledged and whose should be permitted or pass unnoticed. Similar strategies are at work in news media, which distinguish between ‘worthy’ and ‘unworthy’ victims, the latter being victims of the government’s own policies (or their allies) and therefore receiving blander coverage (Herman and Chomsky 2002: lxiii). A case in point is media coverage of the 1991 Gulf War and the censoring of images of foreign civilian casualties in the ‘War on Terror’, including from drone strikes. As Jean Baudrillard has pointed out, the Gulf War was fought by a US-led coalition using aerial bombardment with computer-generated images of the battlefield, where the ‘enemy only appears as a computerised target’ (Baudrillard 1995: 62). This aided in the dehumanisation of the ‘enemy’ not only for combatants but also for the Western public, watching the same images transmitted ‘live’ on TV news. The ideology of ‘clean, technological war’ distances viewers from the suffering and promotes the image of a moral and just war.

The Gulf War and subsequent conflicts bear out Paul Virilio’s assertion that ‘the history of battle is primarily the history of radically changing fields of perception’ (1989: 7, original emphasis) together with links he and Baudrillard make between war and cinema, making the ‘logistics of perception’ (ibid.: 4) central to both. In the use of virtual reality environments in operational warplanes, they identified a major feature of the so-called paradigm of ‘new war’, distinguished from the old war of confrontation between armies, yet which is similar to old colonial wars in its aim of exercising domination over ‘the refractory forces on the planet’ (Baudrillard 1995: 86).

The electronic battlefield of automated war affords combatants huge psychological distance from those they are maiming and killing. Zygmunt Bauman regards this as an extension of the rational project that included the Holocaust. The architects of the ‘Final Solution’ had to find ways of overcoming what Arendt called ‘that “animal pity by which all normal men are affected in the presence of physical suffering”’, namely means of distancing perpetrators from victims so as to facilitate the violence and reduce moral qualms (Bauman 2000: 184). This involved creating techniques of moral indifference, such as distancing perpetrators from the ‘face’ of their victims through technology and bureaucracy; in this way, causal connections between one’s own actions and suffering are hidden.
As a counterpoint, Bauman invokes Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophy in which ethical behaviour is elicited by the presence of the face, which conveys a sense of the Other’s vulnerability. For Levinas (1969), this ethical obligation emanates from God, a radical alterity (‘the altogether-other’) that lies beyond the face of the Other yet towards which it gestures. An encounter with the face of the other, therefore, is an embrace of alterity. Yet, even for Levinas, there are those whose alterity has no appeal: the Palestinian has no face, he once suggested in an interview, and therefore their vulnerability does not pose the obligation not to kill (1989: 294). Unlike many other studies of the ethics of spectatorship, this book does not draw on a Levinasian approach. It is more interested in the political contexts through which otherness is constructed: how categories of people are othered, so that they may be subjugated and beaten down, or so that their suffering and death become acceptable.

Even films with an explicit human rights agenda can perpetuate indifference, as Elizabeth Goldberg highlights in her study of fiction films that aim to tell ‘the truth’ about previously silenced histories of oppression. These are films about distant conflicts, privileging the stories of white/Western protagonists, played by Western stars, and what they did against the backdrop of collective struggles. Through what Goldberg calls a ‘split narrative’ and a Bildungsroman format, the Western subject is prioritised over other subjects – racial Others, who are perceived as disposable and relegated to the background. For Goldberg, the problem with this genre is not its failure to reflect historical ‘truth’ but ‘its use of the spectacle of tortured bodies within a classic Hollywood structure’ that reinforces assumed Western superiority and hegemony (Goldberg 2007: 30).

One of her examples is a scene in Salvador (1986), where the protagonist Boyle and another photojournalist, in search of a photo opportunity, ascend a hill where bodies of the disappeared have been unceremoniously dumped. Ostensibly, the film denounces these atrocities, highlighting Boyle’s moral awakening and accusations against the US government for its complicity with the repressive regime. Visually, and at the level of the protagonists, however, it confirms an imperialistic logic, depicting the spectacle of dead and dying bodies as the background to the Western characters’ quest – these human rights violations being placed, Goldberg claims, in service to the film’s genre, not ‘as testimonials to their own occurrence’ (Goldberg 2001: 259).

**Reflection on Causes and Contexts of Atrocity**

Human rights is a discourse of moral protest. It says: ‘That’s terrible – we must stop this.’ However, for Slavoj Žižek, the SOS call to ‘do something’ inculcates a false sense of urgency. In this emphasis on immediate action, he
reads an anti-theoretical impulse (‘There is no time to reflect: we have to act now’). Instead, he suggests, ‘there are situations when the only truly “practical” thing to do is to resist the temptation to engage immediately and to “wait and see” by means of a patient, critical analysis’ (Žižek 2009: 6). Though the view that sometimes it is better to reflect and do nothing would be anathema to most human rights activists, such reflection might help to strengthen activism.

By reflecting, Žižek means analysing what he calls ‘the complex interaction of the three modes of violence’: subjective violence (carried out by agents), the symbolic violence of language, and the objective violence of our economic and political systems. ‘One should resist’, he writes, ‘the fascination of subjective violence’, that of ‘evil’ individuals and other clearly recognisable agents, and criminal and terrorist acts, because it is merely ‘the most visible’ of these three modes (ibid.: 10). A kind of decoy, the spectacle of physical violence can prevent us from thinking about the broader causes and contexts of violence; we do not see the other types of violence because they are so routine and therefore invisible. Indeed, Žižek compares systemic violence to the universe’s dark matter – matter that is unseen, but without which the universe would not behave in the way it does.

An anthropologist who has studied political violence, Nancy Scheper-Hughes similarly remarks that an exclusive focus on the physical violence of atrocity is not only voyeuristic but ‘misses the point’ of ‘the larger project of witnessing, critiquing, and writing against violence, injustice, and suffering’ (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 1). When violence is regarded as the product of economic, political and social relations, its critique consists in making inequality, exploitation and injustice visible, rather than simply advocating compassion for suffering, tolerance and respect for otherness. In this book, I am interested in how film representation moves beyond an appeal to spectacular violence and icons of victimisation that elicit compassion for an oppressed Other. Although films necessarily foreground subjective violence, they can also allude to other, less obvious types of violence; and the extent to which they connect the three modes of violence determines their complexity. This means remaining alert to other possibilities within films, their ability to trace everyday or systemic violence, or the continuity between that everyday violence and eruptions of direct violence.

A key concern of this book is how films reflect on the ways in which people give their consent to atrocities or become part of systems of violence. Among the thinkers who have given me my bearings in this regard is Hannah Arendt, for whom the ‘banality of evil’ – a phrase that emphasises the ordinarity of perpetrators, rejecting the idea that they are simply sadistic ‘monsters’ – was one of the major features and lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust. While atrocity is usually conceived as an abnegation of morality, Arendt highlighted how it is often justified by its perpetrators as a moral act, forming part of
socially permissible behaviour under given circumstances. Robert Jay Lifton’s term ‘atrocity-producing situation’, an environment in which brutalities are sanctioned and normalised, aptly encapsulates this alteration of morality. Lifton first elaborated the concept in his study of US Vietnam War veterans and later updated it for the Iraq War (Lifton 1973; Lifton 2004). As colonial processes have been central to fashioning present-day forms of violence, they are prominent in my analysis, forming the paradigmatic atrocity-producing situation.

The imperialist enterprise involved a ‘rethinking of the category of the human’ (Calhoun 2010: 38). Atrocities were committed against indigenous populations in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Australasia as part of colonial exploitation because they were regarded as lesser humans. As Upendra Baxi points out, this politics of cruelty was consistent with the European Enlightenment tradition in which the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) and the US Bill of Rights (1791) were embedded. According to its criteria, the human was defined by ‘the capacity to reason and autonomous moral will’, and variously ‘excluded “slaves”, “heathens”, “barbarians”, colonized peoples, indigenous populations, women, children, the impoverished, and the insane’ (Baxi 2008: 44). Inaugurated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), contemporary human rights, in contrast, are defined by their inclusivity, based on values of a common humanity, therefore assuming that all human lives have equal value. Yet, questions of ‘who counts as human?’ persist, as political exclusions from the ideal of common humanity are all too evident. For example, when the state is the safeguard of its citizens’ rights, those who are stateless refugees fall through the net, treated as less than human, as Arendt observed in The Origins of Totalitarianism (see Chapter 4).

Another ambiguity is whether states remain beholden to their human rights obligations when they act outside their own territory, including in occupied territory. Consistent with the underlying principle of universality, human rights obligations ought to be applicable across territorial borders (Lubell 2010: 261). Yet when states wage conflicts abroad they regularly flout human rights. Extraterritoriality, the spatial topography of empire, where the same rules and restraints do not seem to apply, will turn out to be a common theme in this book. Such extraterritorial operations have become increasingly significant in the ‘War on Terror’, yet another fracturing of human rights universality.
A RECONFIGURED FRAMEWORK OF MORALITY AND ETHICS

The terms ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’ are often used as synonyms. In this book, however, morality refers to the domain of normative values, manifesting in socially formed laws and codes of conduct. Morality exists in multiple forms and differs from one set of circumstances to another. In contrast, ethics explores the conditions under which morality is constructed under different circumstances; it is a meta-reflection on the moral framework.

Human rights constitute one site in which norms are constructed and enforced, embodying both law and morality. Even when states are in breach of its norms, they tend to deny it in order to maintain their moral standing in the international community, opening up a gap between their stated and their actual behaviour. The contemporary human rights regime comprises not only human rights law (which protects the rights of individuals under a state’s authority) but also international humanitarian law (known as the ‘law of war’, which places restraints on armed conflict – for example, the Geneva Conventions) and international criminal law (which is concerned with crimes against humanity, genocide and aggression). Although they have different origins and purposes, each of these branches of law consists of a similar set of prohibitions, and several acts are the subject of more than one body of law, for example torture and enforced disappearance, as will be seen in chapters to follow. David Scheffer (2006) has proposed the collective term ‘atrocity crimes’ for a range of large-scale crimes involving a systematic or widespread assault on populations which currently fall under different legal fields, including genocide and crimes against humanity. ‘Atrocity crimes’ epitomises the definition of atrocity in this book.

As well as offering a rich experience of specific scenarios in which human rights issues are encountered, cinema is another site, beyond the law, in which norms are constructed and reconstructed. I argue that films adopt either a predominantly moral or a predominantly ethical approach in the construction of their cinematic world. For example, they can construct a moral universe in which we give consent to certain kinds of violence, which then become acceptable. Essential to this is their ‘structure of sympathy’ (a term derived from cognitive theorist Murray Smith), which establishes allegiance with characters, a moral kinship based on ‘traits we wish or desire to possess’ (Smith 1999: 218, original emphasis). In this way, films encourage spectators to root for characters and desire particular narrative outcomes. The mainsprings of classic narrative – causality, closure, coherence – often work towards creating a moral tale of good and evil which is unsuited to a properly ethical treatment of the subject of atrocity. In Chapters 1 and 2, films with tidy resolutions and narrative teloi towards moral punishment or redemption are contrasted with...
films that withdraw from viewers the certainty of a normative moral universe and thereby offer greater space for ethical reflection.

Whereas the endeavours of human rights monitoring and activism lie in checking whether rights are confirmed or denied – ‘naming and shaming’ offending governments – a shift from a moral to an ethical perspective ‘bring[s] to light what their confirmation or denial mean’ (Rancière 2010: 68). Although it is usually governments that place orders for heinous policies, ordinary people are also involved, to the extent that we ‘assent to them, often by our silence’, or support them in other ways, making us ‘complicit in what is done in our collective name’ (Gregory 2004: 29). This book develops what Nouri Gana calls ‘complicity as a locus of analysis and a modality of critique’ (2008: 37). It explores how films implicate spectators by ‘set[ting] in motion an imaginative and empathizing process through which viewers can determine for themselves the degree to which they might be unwittingly involved as subjects in historical circumstances that might not initially qualify even as objects of remote concern for them’ (ibid.: 36). Therefore, it asks how films make us engage with a past (or present) that we didn’t think we were part of. How do they invite us to confront the causes and contexts of violence and suffering? How do they build new perceptions or confirm existing ones?

**EMBODIED SPECTATORSHIP**

As noted earlier, Brechtian aesthetics has predominated as the model of ethical or political cinema. The films I discuss contain some features that Brecht ascribes to his epic theatre: they offer spectators a different ‘picture of the world’, make them ‘face something’, bring them to ‘the point of recognition’ and turn ‘the human’ into ‘an object of enquiry’, rather than taking it for granted (Brecht 1964: 37). However, they rarely break their artifice through self-reflexivity and by no stretch of the imagination can they be thought of as ‘Brechtian’. Stylistically, they share affinity with what Brecht called ‘dramatic theatre’ – in providing spectators with ‘sensations’, involving us in the ‘experience’, they engage our emotions and empathy.

Underlying the Brechtian suspicion of emotions is the belief that they passively absorb us in the spectacle. Yet the findings of film theory over the last twenty years suggest that spectatorship is not a passive condition. As Jacques Rancière elucidates in *The Emancipated Spectator*, the spectator is an active interpreter, feeling and understanding, composing their own version of what they see with various elements before them; as spectators, we ‘all the time link what we see to what we have seen and said, done and dreamed’ (2009: 17). Moreover, new technologies that have emerged over the last two decades have fostered new forms of viewing experience. Laura Mulvey (2006) has even
reconsidered her earlier account of spectatorship in the light of DVD technology. With new technologies, the flow of a film can be arrested so that, even when we watch a film that is constructed rather conventionally, we engage with it differently and more actively.

The films discussed in this book are closer to two alternative models of political cinema offered by Rancière and Gilles Deleuze. Rancière defines the political as making a space political that was not before; political art is that which ‘re-configure[s] the fabric of sensory experience’ in order to ‘make the invisible visible’, disrupt established relations and, conversely, relate what was ‘previously unrelated’ (Rancière 2010: 140, 141). Rancière is speaking of fictional creations that ‘re-fram[e] the real’ in ways that create ‘new forms of perception’ of what is given to us as the real (ibid.: 141). This encapsulates film’s ability to create a shift of perspective: how it can be ethico-political without making overt political statements and make audiences think without telling them what to think.

Deleuze suggests two ways in which cinema provokes thought. Firstly, its images produce a sensory affect that triggers conscious reflection, which then alters how we perceive the images when we revisit them, either during our film viewing or later on, resulting in another ‘affective shock’ (Deleuze 1989: 161). Secondly, the sheer external affective force of cinematic images is capable of confronting us with what has remained ‘unthinkable’ and alien to our habitual thought (ibid.: 179). For Deleuze, cinema’s affective qualities are what produce reflection and insight. Far from reacting with a ‘distanced gaze’ at the spectacle, we respond viscerally to cinema’s technological stimuli. The film is an ‘event’, consisting of light, colour (even in black-and-white films, which rely on variations of shade), movement and sound, that acts upon us (Powell 2005: 55).

Although the face in close-up is celebrated for its affective power, Deleuze gives equal prominence to the ‘affects of things’, such the “point” of Jack the Ripper’s knife which is ‘no less an affect than the fear which overcomes his features’ (1992: 97). Affects also reside in colours; for example, ‘the atmospheric colour which pervades all the others’ (Deleuze 1986: 118). Drawing an analogy with painting, Deleuze differentiates between what the image represents and the image itself, which possesses its own visceral force (Deleuze 1989: xii; Deleuze 2004: 25). In a self-portrait by Van Gogh, it is the thick brushstrokes, jarring colours and swirling forms that seize viewers, before they react to it as a representation of the artist. Deleuze claims that cinema’s movement-images are similarly sensational, not to be confused with the sensationalism of what is depicted.

Deleuze distinguishes clichéd, predictable emotions from affects that arise from ‘the unexpected, the unrecognized, the unrecognizable’ (2000: 369). Previous discussion has highlighted the play on moral sentiment (the ‘politics
of pity’) as one of the ideological effects of human rights representations, which obtains a further political value in serving to justify foreign policies. This book, therefore, analyses how films use emotion, not merely for sentimental function, but also to generate new affects. Indeed, it argues for cinema’s capacity to produce new connections and disrupt habitual perceptions, laying the basis for breaking coercive habits of thinking and behaving as part of a collective social transformation.

In its film analysis, this book also draws on the work of scholars who have adapted Deleuze’s ideas in inspirational ways such as Daniel Frampton, Laura Marks, Anna Powell and Alison Young, along with other theorists of embodied spectatorship such as Vivian Sobchack and Jennifer Barker, whose conceptual framework is derived from phenomenology. If film provokes thought it is because film itself ‘thinks’, Daniel Frampton argues in his book *Filmosophy*. Filmmakers make decisions that affect our reception of the film; decisions that we can understand as the thinking of the film’ (Frampton 2006: 117, original emphasis). A film tells us what it ‘thinks’ about its characters and subjects through choices of framing, editing, colour, sound, camera movement and focus – a form of thinking that we understand affectively. The film’s thinking is not reducible to its makers’ intentions, however, since the film that filmgoers experience is a mechanical, transsubjective entity that has its own being and becoming. At the same time, the viewer’s own affective thinking mingles with the film and shapes their encounter with it, which accounts for the fact that different people can experience the same images in startlingly different ways dependent on how images interact with their own embodied histories and circuit of images they have previously encountered.

As Frampton writes, ‘with a greater sense of the thinking that a film can do [and provoke] we can see all sorts of subversions of meanings without resort[ing] to calling them Brechtian devices’ (ibid.: 175). The notion of film-thinking gives value to smaller, less bombastic formal gestures, countering the idea that Brechtian self-reflexivity is the only way a film can be thought-provoking. Through this inclusive approach, all films can be recognised as ‘thoughtful’, though some think with greater subtlety than others. Such small subversions are significant, because they exist within the films and anyone can encounter them through attentive viewing.

Although much film criticism tends to privilege the camera, and hence the gaze, ‘Film-thinking inhabits and is its world, rather than simply “looking” at it as the “camera” rhetoric persuades’ (ibid.: 99, original emphasis). While our natural human inclination is to place ourselves at the centre of perception, Deleuze highlights how cinema puts ‘perception into things’ (1986: 81). Cinema shows us objects from perspectives we could never inhabit ourselves. It tears sounds and images from their referents in the real world, and juxtaposes them in impossible or unexpected ways, such as the superimposition of
a man inside a beer glass in *Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chelovek s kinoapparatom*, 1929). Because cinema frees us from natural perception, it can show us what we overlook in reality, enabling us to notice the unnoticed.

The digital is thought to break the indexical link to the real world or profilmic reality, thus engendering, it is alleged, profoundly different relationships between object, image and viewer. Yet sound and vision in film have always been constructed. The alterations of digital imaging affect how we perceive a character or event but so, too, do other cinematic devices such as lighting, colour, composition, editing and sound. Rather than regard the constructedness of cinematic aesthetics as less ethical or less ‘true’, this book highlights the complex negotiation between image and reality. As Frampton writes, ‘film uses the real; but it takes it and immediately moulds it and then refigures it and puts it back in front of the filmgoer as interpretation, as re-perception’ (2006: 4). It creates its own world, a ‘cousin’ of our reality that allows us to understand that reality differently.

Although cinema is an audio-visual medium, Laura Marks has offered a comprehensive account of it as a multisensory experience by combining phenomenological and Deleuzian approaches. Through haptic visuality (vision based on touch) and synaesthesia (perception that mobilises two or more senses simultaneously), film can appeal to touch, smell and taste. Marks’s chosen texts are intercultural experimental films that question the visual register’s ability to yield knowledge, often obscuring vision in ‘protective gestures toward the people and places they represent’ (Marks 2000: 178). In contrast to the objectifying logic of the visual gaze, these ‘less ocularcentric ways of seeing’ are implicitly more ethical (ibid.: 136). Though Marks is sceptical of mainstream cinema, which she believes presents a commodified version of sensuous knowledge or misguidedly attempts to create ‘a total sensory environment’ (Marks 2002: 20), her arguments are relevant in many ways to the films covered in this book. Sensory images trigger and disturb our memories and provoke us to think about the past (and present) in new ways.

For Vivian Sobchack, ‘the film experience is meaningful not to the side of our bodies but because of our bodies’ (2004b: 60). Her emphasis on the body as the means by which we know and make sense of the world derives from the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In *The Tactile Eye*, Jennifer Barker has developed Sobchack’s insights, foregrounding film’s tactile qualities and its ability to summon viewers’ own embodied histories as sites of reception and understanding. Our bodily investment in the screen image calls us to ask ‘Where are we in this picture?’ , to place ‘ourselves in relation to others and to history’ (Barker 2009: 7).

Together, these theorists offer productive ways of exploring how films implicate us in histories we may not have experienced ourselves and point to strategies that address (though do not entirely overcome) the problems of
representation outlined above. This book argues that this kind of affective thinking, which immerses us into the image, is a more profound way of understanding than just thinking about the issues.

**OUTLINE OF THE BOOK**

This book is not a survey of films about historical atrocities. Neither is it an empirical study of how real audiences have responded to these films, although it does refer to their reception contexts. Rather, it explores the relationship between spectator and image through an analysis of the images themselves. Every moment on screen is the result of decisions taken by filmmakers and alternative paths not taken, determining the kinds of knowledge about past and present atrocities a film conveys to its audiences and the viewing experiences it creates. Every aesthetic choice is also an ethical choice, the actual counterpart of a potentially infinite set of possibilities.

The purpose of film analysis is to ‘reveal the ingredients’ that ‘made you understand the film in a certain way’ (Frampton 2006: 181). In this book, that includes contextual as well as textual details, as films cannot be properly understood without reference to the historical conditions of their production and reception. Having used the films to inform my analysis of broader issues, my aim is to alert readers to potential ways of engaging or interacting with the films when they subsequently view them or others like them. Each chapter deals with the filmic treatment of specific atrocity crimes – torture, genocide, enforced disappearance, deportation and apartheid respectively. The book does not just use films to illustrate these human rights ‘issues’, but explores how films ‘think’ about each form of state violence and produce either moral or ethical confrontations with those events through their aesthetic choices. The analyses are intended to be provocative for the purpose of stimulating thought and debate.

Chapter 1 elaborates the book’s argument about morality and ethics by discussing documentaries and fictional dramas about torture and the ‘War on Terror’, including *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007) and *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008). It argues that *Zero Dark Thirty* adheres to a moral script about 9/11 and its aftermath, justifying the self-appointed forces of good going over to ‘the dark side’. By constructing such a moral universe, the film helps to normalise torture and other illicit practices, making them acceptable. *Taxi to the Dark Side* creates another kind of moral universe, inspiring pity for the dark side’s victims and outrage towards the policy’s architects. However, *Standard Operating Procedure*, though criticised for its lack of moral perspective, stands out as the most ‘ethical’ of these films, as it engages us at multiple sensory levels and explores how moral norms are reconstructed in the ‘atrocity-producing situation’.
Many people derive their historical knowledge from movies. Chapter 2 addresses this issue through a discussion of fictional films about the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide. Historical dramas frequently offer up tales of good versus evil that reassure viewers about their moral place in the world, as in the ‘one good man’ motif exemplified in Schindler’s List. Though academic criticism has critiqued these tendencies, it also has a predominantly moralistic outlook, preoccupied with taboos and limits. This chapter argues that such moralism, which presents perpetrators as antithetical to everything that we, the viewers, stand for, impedes ethical reflection. Inspired by the philosophy of Hannah Arendt, it attempts to shift the debate by investigating how films enable or prevent insights into how genocide happens through the wider population’s complicity. It elaborates Arendt’s ‘boomerang thesis’, which questions traditional interpretations of the Holocaust as a ‘unique’ event, suggesting links between colonialism, the Holocaust and contemporary atrocities, and applies these insights in its readings of The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas (2008), Hotel Rwanda, Sometimes in April (2005) and The Night of Truth (La Nuit de la vérité, 2004).

Chapter 3 explores concerns with memory in films about the disappearances in Chile and Argentina, which encompass thrillers, poetic, performative and animated documentaries, and surreal narratives: Imagining Argentina (2003), Chronicle of an Escape (Crónica de una fuga, 2006), Nostalgia for the Light (Nostalgia de la luz, 2010), The Blonds (Los rubios, 2003), Abuelas (2011) and Post Mortem (2010). As these films are aimed at least partly at transnational audiences, the chapter asks how they foster audience identification with memories they have never had. It draws on Michael Rothberg’s concept of ‘multidirectional memory’ to argue that these films contain powerful associations, evoking other histories of the disappeared in ways that disrupt and unsettle the memories we hold as individuals and communities. One of the links it explores is between the Latin American ‘dirty wars’ and the ‘War on Terror’, in which enforced disappearance has returned on a global scale.

Whereas the previous chapters are concerned with the multisensory character of spectatorship and response to atrocity images, Chapters 4 and 5 deal with another aspect of our embodied reality: spatial relationships. This part of the book focuses on how different bodies inhabit space, become othered and racialised – encounters shaped by colonial histories. Theorists such as Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Doreen Massey (2005) have pointed out that space is socially produced, continually remade and organised according to power structures. In today’s world, ‘matters of space, territories, borders’ remain ‘crucial’ to ‘issues of power’ (Rancière 2010: 149). From Michael Shapiro’s work (2009), which asserts cinema’s ability to map spaces of geopolitical violence, these chapters develop the analytical tool of ‘spatial mapping’. Films map and produce space, enter into real spaces and create imaginary ones. In
so doing, they can reveal the pervasive character of state violence, providing images of structural violence without the representation of spectacular violence or sentimental affects; instead, viewers are invited to infer their own links from the mise-en-scène.

Science fiction films that have dramatised issues of immigration, detention and deportation form the focus of Chapter 4, which argues that, far from being about the future, science fiction is a historiographic mode which can situate current oppressive realities in a longer history of violence. In their mises-en-scène, *Children of Men*, *District 9* (2009) and *Monsters* (2010) make links between wealthy states’ present-day treatment of immigrants and the historical atrocities of the ‘War on Terror’, Nazi concentration camps and apartheid. Combining location shooting with CGI, these films create a recognisable world, a slightly altered version of our own reality, which provokes us to scrutinise an oppressive geopolitical order. A coda on the science fiction blockbuster *Elysium* (2013), which shares similar features, both reinforces and qualifies the chapter’s argument about the genre’s critical potential.

Chapter 5 focuses on space as an instrument of everyday violence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and explores how the cinematic use of space reveals social divisions and enables us to perceive the conflict differently from how news media present it. It shows how the trauma narrative invoked in *Waltz with Bashir* fits with the dominant perspective on the war, while spatial meanings illuminate the conflict’s political and historical background. Those spatial meanings form part of the dramatic intent of fictional films such as *Close to Home* (*Karov La Bayit*, 2005), *Lemon Tree* (*Etz Limon*, 2008) and *Paradise Now* (2005), and various documentaries about the Israel–West Bank wall. In *Waltz with Bashir*, however, they derive from its video game-like portrayal of the war.

In the Conclusion, I recap the book’s main insights in the light of *The Act of Killing* (2012), a critically acclaimed documentary about the Indonesian genocide which was released just as this book was being completed.

NOTES

1. The term ‘family resemblances’, proposed by Wittgenstein (1969) in his study of language, has been applied to similarities between different atrocities by Schepers-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) and Freyenhagen (2013).

2. For elaboration of this aspect of Adorno’s thought, see Freyenhagen (2013: 133–61).

3. Distinguishing between morality and ethics is a recognised philosophical practice. This book’s distinction is partly inspired by Aaron (2007: 109), who defines morality as ‘predefined codes of conduct’ and ethics as ‘thinking through one’s relationship to morality’.