Introduction

Ernst van Alphen and Mieke Bal

In times of intercultural tensions and conflicts, sincerity matters. Traditionally, sincerity concerns a natural enactment of authenticity anchored in, and yielding, truth. Such enactment is easily misunderstood in intercultural situations. Moreover, sincerity is considered fundamentally corporeal rather than textual. Within such logic, truth is enacted through the body and imagined as an integrated semiotic field. Beyond the truth that is stated, this field includes the unwittingly emitted signs of the body.

This traditional view is based on the common sense defense of sincerity. While easily disavowed by semiotically aware cultural critics, this view is not so easily, or facilely, dismissed. Like the Lacanian disavowal and simultaneous recognition of ideology ("I know very well but all the same . . ."), this view persists because it means too much to be sold cheaply. Such a defense might run, crudely, "Look, whatever you might tell us about historical origins and rhetorical articulations, isn't sincerity something that we need and must *always* have needed?" Think of "sincerity" as, for instance, an issue of love, or of truth telling between any two persons in many kinds of meaningful relations where one party has reason to care whether the words of the other party are honest in their account of sentiment, desire, or disposition. This issue engages a binary opposition of the starkest kind. Either the lover or friend is sincere and relational bliss follows; or he or she is outright lying, thus entailing a plot of insincerity and deception off which many a novel feeds.

In the larger public-cultural field, one can also think of all of the denunciations of "postmodern irony" that have marked public discourse (at least in the West) over the past two decades, denunciations that tend to valorize the authentic and the sincere over political intelligence and rhetorical sophistication. This conception of the postmodern is so easily disqualified precisely because it dared challenge the above-mentioned traditional view of sincerity by undermining the binary, hence absolute, conception of truth that sustained it. These two examples suggest right away that sincerity is firmly lodged both in personal relations and in public and political tensions. For this reason, it is necessary to bring the concept of sincerity to closer scrutiny today, at a cultural moment when tensions, explicitly or implicitly cast in terms of either *sincerity* or *rhetoric*, often play themselves out in cross- or intercultural confrontations.

Such a formulation makes clear that the issue of sincerity cannot be appropriated as the exclusive domain of any intellectual field or academic discipline. Indeed, it has always been a rather under-illuminated yet present issue in many disciplines. Sincerity plays a major role in law, the arts (in literature, but just as much in the visual and performing arts), and religion. This is not surprising when we look at the historical background of the concept. *Sincerity* enters the English language in the sixteenth century, during an epoch in which the theater emerges as the dominant idiom of secular representation, and at a time of major religious changes. As much as we may like to disavow the analogy, the present historical moment has much in common with that historical era. This is clear when we realize that now as then, religious and cultural conflicts take place at the same time that representational idioms and media undergo major transformations. To honor this historical analogy and learn from it, this book focuses mainly on the present, while the historical origin of the term *sincerity* is discussed in order to better understand its present manifestations and ramifications.

One element that the two moments of sincerity's introduction in the sixteenth century and its questioning today (in this book) share is intercultural contact and subsequent tensions. Therefore, this book is concerned with the ways in which the performance of sincerity is culturally specific. Another common feature between the two eras is the major developments in media culture. As the printed book gained access to public culture and

theater became a primary cultural mode of expression, sincerity became entangled in medial forms that complicated, already at the beginning, the integrated semiotic field where body and mind were believed to be one. Today, sincerity is equally enacted in various ways in different media and disciplines. We now foreground that acting aspect by invoking the term *performance*—a "doing" instead of a "being." Both law and the arts study such enactments. This book's assumption, that sincerity consists of a performance, implies a special focus on the theatricality of sincerity: its bodily, linguistic, and social performances, and the success, or felicitousness, of such performances. Central to our discussion, therefore, is the notion of "acts of sincerity." What do acts of sincerity in speech or enactment do, produce, or fail to do and produce? This invocation calls for an examination of the ways in which we need to bracket or transfigure "sincerity" rather than simply dismissing it.

This raises the question of what it is that is performed in such acts. In a traditional sense, sincerity indicates the performance of an inner state on one's outer surface so that others can witness it. But the very distinction between inner self and outer manifestation implies a split that assaults the traditional integration that marks sincerity. This idea of expression entails the possibility of a dialogue between the inner self and its external representation. The idea of this expression (including the potential dialogue it entails) is the starting point of Chapter 1. With this conception, sincerity is tightly bound up with an equally traditional view of subjectivity. In order for sincerity to come to the surface and, indeed, enter the social realm, a specific notion of subjectivity is necessary. This notion assumes that we, as individuals, have an "inner self" responsible for our conduct, performances, and speeches—in effect, all the ways in which we manifest ourselves for others.

This notion of subjectivity—bound up, in turn, with a dichotomy of mind and body—has been severely deconstructed in past decades. Yet sincerity, both as producer and as effect of this notion of subjectivity, has not been thought through in relation to such critiques. Though many no longer believe in the traditional notion of subjectivity, sincerity, it appears, has been more difficult to relinquish, and thus remains unreflectively present in many social discourses. Given the two examples of love and postmodern irony mentioned above, this reluctance to engage sincerity in a general

critique of subjectivity points to an attachment we will take seriously, even if we do not cling to it. This book attempts to supply such critical reflections on sincerity, especially in its relation to subjectivity. The first part of this book, "Sincerity as Subjectivity Effect," deals with the complex and often buried relations between subjectivity and sincerity. Here, historical beginnings are confronted with contemporary practices, particularly in literature, the arts, law, and philosophy—areas in which these conventions are still influential.

In the first place, the analysis concerns the way the bond between subjectivity and sincerity, however naturalized it has become, is not natural. This becomes apparent in the second part, "Declining Sincerity," when subjects actually decline to participate in the culture of sincerity. Such subjects refuse, or ignore, the pressure to endorse a form of subjectivity that relies on, and consists of, a distinction between mind and body, inner and outer, personal and social. As a result, they demonstrate that there is no inner self that manifests itself bodily through performance, and as a consequence, the inner self cannot be witnessed. Not coincidentally, such subjects often belong to what has been construed as "subalternity." This occurrence of a refusal of the dominant form of subjectivity goes to show that the standard concept of subjectivity is not a given, but is instead constantly negotiated and construed—and therefore able to be declined.

But *declining*—a verb chosen for its connotations of polite negotiation—is not a facile cancellation, for such a cancellation can be no more than wishful thinking. Sincerity, in that negotiation, is the sting of subjectivity, the Achilles heel where subjectivity as we know it can be undermined. This happens when the mechanisms that produce the effects of sincerity no longer function.

This second part of the book is devoted to reflections and case studies on examples of cultural productions that encompass such subjectivity-threatening acts of declining sincerity. In the wake of such acts, alternative kinds of subjectivity emerge. A glimpse of such possibilities, as well as their difficulties in coming to full articulation, will be given in discussions of cinematic, artistic, literary, and philosophical texts.

We can now notice these alternative subjectivities through the way in which they decline sincerity, because what we call here "traditional subjectivity" is no longer generally considered valid. Does the weakened sta-

tus of this notion of subjectivity entail a wholesale rejection of sincerity as an issue of social, cultural, and political interaction? Should we decline sincerity because it is rooted in an inner-outer split in which we no longer believe? Such a rejection would be problematic given the ongoing, crucial political and cultural function of speech acts that have been associated with sincerity (such as vows or oaths) or its absence (such as deceit, lying, hypocrisy, or political maneuvering). That rejection is the wrong conclusion, encouraged by a vulgarized and misunderstood "postmodern irony" that this book does not endorse. A different analysis and evaluation of such speech acts—the idea that performance overrules expression—must not be mistaken for a naïve dismissal of all such acts as "just" play. The undeniable presence and persistence of these acts co-exist, instead, with a transformed conception of subjectivity, a transformed idea of what we believe today to be sincere behavior or expression. This suggests that sincerity can be reframed outside of its bond with subjectivity. The current importance and widespread presence of the media make such reframing necessary.

For this reason, the third part of the book, "Sincerity as Media Effect," proposes somewhat polemically to consider sincerity as framed by media, so as to become a media effect instead of a subjectivity effect. If the notion of sincerity has a future, it lies in this framework. Hence the title of the volume, which stipulates that sincerity is best understood and analyzed as an issue of rhetoric. The third part, therefore, recasts the issues discussed in the first and second parts. Sincerity cannot be dismissed because, while not an integrated consequence and qualification of subjectivity, it is an indispensable *affective* (hence, social) process between subjects. Affect is understood here as intensities that are circulated among subjects. Media play a major role in such circulations and transmissions. As Jill Bennett argues, mass media function as "vectors" for the "migration of affect." Sincerity becomes a primary stake in such circulations through media, so it can be said to become a "media effect."

To counter the possible misunderstanding of a categorical "newness" of contemporary media, we use the term *rhetoric* to point to such effects. For, with hindsight, the subjectivity-bound notion of sincerity has always been a rhetorical one as well. This rhetorical nature of the notion puts any attempt to stage sincerity as the "outing" of the inner self always already

under erasure. This erasure, or bracketing—but not wholesale rejection—of the notion of sincerity is the common thread that runs through all the essays in this volume.

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Each of the following chapters discusses an aspect or argument surrounding sincerity that contributes to the overall "sincerity complex" we are constructing in this book. In the first chapter, Jane Taylor locates a history of the semiotics of sincerity. She identifies and locates the emergence in the sixteenth century of particular rhetorical and performative apparatuses of sincerity, designed to render visible the ideological and productive effects of sincerity. This purpose of the performance of sincerity reverses the standard idea of sincerity because the claim of the latter is precisely that it is a mode of self-expression generally held to be nondiscursive, transparent, and outside of ideology: in other words, spontaneous. Taylor argues that sincerity emerges in sixteenth-century England as a result of the complex negotiations in the shifting terrain among religious devotion, Roman Catholic authority, royal prerogative, and Protestant ambitions. Before the schism there was little room for such spiritual connoisseurship, as faith largely consisted in compliance with a set of givens, rather than in individual interpretation. However, the instrument of investigative terror, the heresy trial, with its specific nexus of power, anxiety, and authenticity, made a conception of sincerity necessary.

Essentially, Taylor proposes that sincerity arises in order to resolve the problem of the paradox of the forced confession. A scrutiny of these confessions throughout the sixteenth century reveals that there is an evolving dialectic between external performance and internal convictions. Therefore sincerity is necessarily a problem of performance. Problematically, though, performance is characterized as insincere because it provides an instrument that makes it possible to represent an inner state on the surface, and thus to falsify it. An inner universe is weighed against external significance. Taylor develops her argument on the basis of, among other artifacts, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet* and Caravaggio's paintings *The Martyrdom of St. Matthew* and the first version of *The Conversion of St. Paul*. In all cases conversion and sincerity result in a crisis of representation, particularly if the body is interpreted as carrying abso-

lute meanings for the condition of the inner being. The problem is ultimately one of figuring in the body those states of consciousness that are incorporeal. This raises problems of logic with the configuration of racial identity. Within this semiotics the figure of the "converted Jew" creates a special problem because Jews, at the time, were considered "black." Thus, the rhetoric of sincerity is at odds with the rhetoric of race; only through a "transparent" skin can we see the inner self. The two rhetorics make contradictory appeals to an identity that is located either within, or on, the surface, that is, the skin. Thus, from the beginning, both sincerity and race are undermined.

So far, the discussion has been concerned with the performance of what people say. But regardless of content, sincerity plays its part in "pure" performance, for example, in the sounds produced by voices. Katherine Bergeron offers a case study of lyrical sincerity in the culture of late-nineteenth-century France, where lyric was defined as "natural." Her case is the legendary actress Sarah Bernhardt. Jules Renard once described the voice of Sarah Bernhardt as a sound so sincere and pure that "you don't even notice it," a sound, he said, "like the song of the trees, or an instrument's monotone noise." The description hardly squares with our contemporary views of the great actress, known today more for melodrama than for monotone. And yet Renard's key images—of naturalness and discretion—suggest another set of values at work, values that shed light not only on Bernhardt, but also on a whole expressive culture that emerged in France after 1870.

Bergeron's chapter reflects on that culture, on a time when the republican embrace of rural France made naturalness a virtue and sincerity a democratic duty. If painters took to the hills, looking for a truer vision *en plein air*, poets and musicians took to the same air in search of a purer lyric accent. Verlaine called this "accent music," and listening to Bernhardt's diction, we begin to understand why. The example of her voice, captured on record by Pathé in 1903, serves as a launching point for a meditation on the material conditions for lyric sincerity, conditions that also yielded a form of modern melody whose most salient trait is a performance one does not even notice.

At the time of the beginning of sincerity, the notion had implications for state politics as well as for individual identity. Considering three

plays by the seventeenth-century Dutch playwright Joost van den Vondel, the third chapter, by Frans-Willem Korsten, argues against expectations from the traditional view that hypocrisy can be a useful skill for ambitious politicians, that it is even inevitable for people who operate in complex organizations. Korsten argues that hypocrisy is structurally and functionally built into any system of political representation. In this context he explores sincerity as a necessary qualification in a political system, a qualification that works on the basis of relationships. He considers sincerity as a passion that lifts the individual's care of self to a collective level. This leads to a consideration of what happens when someone who speaks in public is immediately seen politically, as the representative of a certain group, in a society that consists of several groups-in-relation. In this respect, hypocrisy is a double-edged sword. Whereas hypocrisy is functional in systems of political representation, its inscription onto systems of relations is destructive. As a result, hypocrisy leads to a society of suspicion. Vondel's plays suggest what is required to avoid such a society.

Sincerity is particularly relevant for a consideration of legal practice, up to today. We tend to think that sincerity is primarily a question of the defendant's credibility. But all agents involved are bound by at least the appearance of sincerity. The judge, in particular, is bound to this norm. In his contribution, Carel Smith looks at the role of the judge and considers how the expectation of sincerity is in tension with the status of rules. He deals with the question of what legitimates the judge's verdict when deciding, for example, a case of negligence, discrimination, or robbery. Legal adjudication is conceived as a rule-governed activity: the establishment of a rule of obligation is the result of a complex interplay of standards of adjudication, the final ruling being the inference from a rule of obligation and the facts of the case. To justify the decision in a hard case is to vindicate the interpretation. In short, decision follows interpretation. But legal practice does not confirm this doctrine. Often, the decisive argument to interpret a rule one way rather than another is directed by the fairness of the ruling that would result. The principle "decision follows interpretation" should, therefore, be converted into "interpretation follows decision." This reversal entails a different status for sincerity.

Indeed, this view of legal adjudication is severely contested, for it seems to be at variance with the sincere belief of judges that their judg-

ments are based on law-based reasons. Their interpretations are not justifications in retrospect, but the verdicts' very reasons. According to the majority of legal agents, to hold the principle "interpretation follows decision," then, is to charge the caste of judges with being insincere, and to consider the legitimization of their rulings as "merely rhetorical."

This first part ends with an exploration by Hent de Vries of what it means to "live" a theory, or more precisely, to live one's theory and to do so seriously and thereby sincerely. With this he does not mean the reduction of life to theory, of living theoretically—which would mean, following ordinary usage, living hypothetically, and hence not really living at all. Rather, he aims to establish a connection between the rhetoric of sincerity and what may turn out to be a specifically modern—though also classically tragic—problem of sincerity. To this effect he addresses the question of whether living theory, or living one's theory, requires a certain acceptance of truth, truthfulness, trust, and trustworthiness: indeed, of accepting seriousness and sincerity.

In this sense of "living theory" as living one's theory rather than merely having one, or of a theory sustaining itself only to the extent that it is lived and alive, Stanley Cavell's work is an indispensable guide. Cavell draws attention to an absence in even the most sophisticated readings of J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, such as those by Derrida and Shoshana Felman. He is referring to a line from Euripides' *Hippolytus* of crucial importance to speech act theory. Austin translates this line as: "my tongue swore to, but my heart did not" (1975, 612). Thus, the last chapter of this part returns to the beginning: Taylor's analysis of conversion and confession, the transformation of the inner self as manifested outward.

In the second part of the book, that old bond is not so much rejected as it is bracketed. Rejection presupposes awareness as a conscious act. With the word *bracketed* we seek to do justice to something below the threshold of recognition. This part is devoted to subjects who simply do not engage with the kind of subjectivity that demands sincerity and the concomitant implications of a division between inner and outer being. What happens when sincerity is no longer the manifestation of an interior state on a person's body because that distinction itself is not recognized? This reverses the situation. Now, the (formerly) outward manifestation is the only basis for interaction with personhood, and it must be dealt with in the ostensive

absence of anything else to fall back on. From the perspective of those who decline sincerity, this is not an issue: they only act, indifferent to attempts to peek beneath their "surface." This discussion begins with an essay in which Cesare Casarino considers the indifference to sincerity in the context of the articulation of the modern sexual subject—a subject whose very interpellation depends on producing a hidden truth so as to be able to confess it.

Casarino analyzes an emblematic moment of a 1964 documentary on the sexual mores of Italians, *Love Meetings*, by Pier Paolo Pasolini. The interviewer, who asks his questions from within the modern sexual subjectivity just described, receives a politically sophisticated answer from a child, an answer that undermines the modern technology of power that Foucault calls "the deployment of sexuality." The author alleges the case of Foucault's assessment of *Love Meetings*. The philosopher's review constitutes at once a highly perceptive and a crucially symptomatic account of Pasolini's intellectual project. Foucault's assessment of *Love Meetings* ought to be read as an attempt to turn Pasolini into the privileged precursor of Foucault's final project. Pasolini's critique of the "deployment of sexuality" needs to be read as integral to Pasolini's ambivalent engagement with Gramsci and, in particular, with Gramsci's articulation of "The Southern Question."

The "Southerner," here, articulates a subjectivity that goes against the grain of that modern sexual subjectivity. Not coincidentally, the interviewees, being both Southern and children, happen to be "subaltern" subjects. Considering the relations between subalternity and an act of declining sincerity even where sincerity is most expected—when disclosing something about their sexuality—this chapter shows glimpses of an alternative subjectivity. These glimpses become visible in some of the ways in which Pasolini's project at once uncannily anticipates as well as significantly diverges from Foucault's own articulation of the modern sexual subject.

But one does not need to be a subaltern to decline modern subjectivity—although it certainly seems to help. Similarly, one doesn't need to stand in a court of law to challenge from within the alleged sincerity of the legal process. In the second chapter of this part, Yasco Horsman discusses the paradoxes of confession through an analysis of J. M. Coetzee's

acclaimed novel *Disgrace* (1999). Upon its publication, *Disgrace* was widely read as a response to the proceedings of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As is well known, during these proceedings applicants were granted amnesty for crimes committed during the apartheid years in return for a full disclosure of past deeds. The TRC became a ritual in which a common "humanity" was established through scenes of repentance and forgiveness. The first part of *Disgrace* can be read as both an allegory of this ritual and as a criticism of a structural problem inherent in the scene of confession. In this scene, an issue pertaining to speech act theory comes up. As an admission of guilt, a confession depends on the utterance of certain well-known formulae in order to be recognized as an act of confession. Yet in order for this performance to be successful it needs to be perceived as serious, heartfelt, and hence sincere. As John Lurie, the central character of *Disgrace*, points out, this implies that a confession exceeds the strictly legal function and enters a different domain, that of psychology or religion.

The chapter begins with a consideration of the paradoxes of confession as dramatized by the novel. It then offers an interpretation of part two of the novel, which depicts Lurie's disgrace resulting from his refusal to participate in a confession ritual. Part two of the novel consists of a series of loosely connected events that never quite culminate in a moment of closure. The dejected subjectivity of the character can be read as a consequence of Lurie's refusal of a "rhetoric of sincerity" that would have grounded his words. He refuses sincerity because he considers it merely a rhetoric. By refusing that rhetoric, he also loses his modern subjectivity; he becomes "like a dog." Due to his refusal he becomes a kind of "honorary" subaltern subject.

The next chapter in this second part discusses how the workplace also yields its forms of declining subjectivity: labor relations produce their own "refusniks." David McNeill argues that in the post-fordist labor landscape of the developed world, the requirements for constant demonstrations of sincerity augment more traditional forms of surveillance within disciplinary regimes. Accordingly it is no longer enough to work efficiently and productively. In addition, or even instead, it has become obligatory to participate eagerly and believe in the policies and ambitions of the employer, and by extension, the state. As labor becomes

more precarious, new protocols have developed through which enthusiasm and loyalty can, and must, be performed. Sincerity, here, is understood as the congruence of avowal and actual feeling. Thus it serves as a means for the assessment of these performances. These performances colonize the totality of both the domestic sphere and of civil society itself.

McNeill proposes the concept of "a-sincerity" as a means of understanding the ways in which these strategies organize acquiescence and aid the expansion of contemporary capitalist social relations. He investigates aesthetic strategies that create spaces outside the structures of identification offered by the state and other institutions. This concept of a-sincerity casts its shadow over all other cases discussed here, and especially that of migratory labor and the untenable subjectivity it entails. This will be analyzed in the final chapter of this part.

Leslie Adelson discusses why the notion of (in)sincerity cannot be applied to qualify migratory subjects. In her much-debated book *Globalization and Its Discontents*, Saskia Sassen rightly characterizes migrant laborers late in the twentieth century as "emblematic subjects" of a global economy dating back to the 1970s. The emblematic labor of literary configurations of migration in the same period is perhaps far more difficult to discern. While much scholarship on the literatures of migration continues to presuppose an authentic migrant self who either suffers indignities or celebrates hybridity sincerely, this presentation offers interpretive alternatives for evaluating the rhetorical conceit and social deixis of personhood in transnational literatures of migration.

Not meant to be a person at all, the cipher of the illegal migrant laborer in Aras Ören's emblematic novella of 1981, *Bitte nix Polizei* (*Please No Police*), invites contemplation of the changing hieroglyphic of ethnicity in our time. While this presentation shares certain precepts with Rey Chow's account of "ethnicity as alienated labor," Turks in Germany are not "protestant ethnics" as Chow defines the term. Adelson correspondingly reads the desire for "personhood" in *Bitte nix Polizei* through an altogether different form of commodification, one that cannot be grasped by any rhetoric of sincerity at all. Beyond the indifference toward sincerity because of its confining implications for personhood, the practical impossibility of sincerity here casts aside the subject of normative subjectivity.

But such casting aside of the notion of sincerity altogether is not quite possible, for we still need to be able to address forms of deceit that can only be defined in opposition to it. In order to retain a useful analytical concept of sincerity it is necessary to theorize it without ties to such forms of subjectivity. To consider the manifestations of insincerity that we come across daily, we turn to mass media. For it is there that we can see how a traditional notion of subjectivity, far from just surviving its critique, is created every time anew by means of rhetoric. Clearly, holding on to such a notion of subjectivity serves a purpose. Hence, for an effective political critique of (in)sincerity without falling back on this traditional notion, we must consider sincerity no longer as a subjectivity effect but as a media effect.

This, at least, is the consequence of the thesis of Jill Bennett's essay, which investigates sincerity as an aesthetic practice that is used by modern media in the global-political context. In recent times, global politics have been driven by a "precautionary principle." Military action and anti-terrorist legislation are justified in terms of an imagined catastrophe; hence politicians seek license to act on what they think *may* happen if they don't act, rather than on evidence of what *will* happen. In this context the performance of sincere belief has acquired a special currency. Where there is no evidence of the presence of an imminent terrorist attack, the basis for offensive action rests solely on the perception of a threat. To this end, the population must feel the presence of danger and experience fear, and politicians must manifest strength of conviction; as in classicist literature where "le vrai" was considered less important than "le vraisemblable," *believing* is what counts, even if it is acknowledged that one may be wrong to believe.

Many analysts, such as documentary filmmaker Michael Moore, have commented on the ways in which a global culture of fear has been actively engendered by media and government operations since September 11, highlighting the way that sensation and affect—in particular, the negative affects of fear and anxiety—have become central to politics. Chapter 10 investigates sincerity—conceived of as the congruence of belief, feeling, and expression—in this global-political context, guided by media. The nature of the affect is here no longer a qualification of the subject, but an effect transmitted by the media: hence, a "media effect."

Bennett's essay focuses on aesthetic practices that challenge the manner in which the contagion of fear, combined with the performance of belief, has come to stand for a "realist" assessment of danger.

One of the critics of this disingenuous form of realism, Jacques Derrida, has also been a subject—in many senses of this now-charged word!—of films. The next chapter in this part takes a look at Derrida's appearances on film in order to trace, through the concept of "spectralité," an alternative form of sincerity. Michael Bachmann treats spectrality on an iconic and discursive level, while it is also inscribed into the films' media-specific systems of belief. Derrida has published several texts dealing with this spectral logic in which something supposedly sincere—testimony or confession, for instance—is necessarily haunted by the possibility of fiction. Bachmann argues that in these films, Derrida on film—poised between his image and its other—is staged, and stages himself, as a ghost. He thus authorizes his philosophical discourse in the form of a "spectral" sincerity that seeks to escape conventional binaries such as truth and fiction. In Derrida's own "projection" of thoughts, sincerity relates to their *mise en scène* rather than to their actual "truth."

Alison Young, in the following chapter, traces the difficulties of achieving sincerity where truth is not in question but its "graspability" is, namely in the wake of trauma. Young examines the extent to which sincerity and insincerity are implicated in each other by considering different genres and their varying reputations for sincerity. Ultimately she discusses the expectations and affects of sincerity and insincerity with reference to two distinct genres: the report of a governmental commission of inquiry and a short documentary film. Both texts concern the traumatic events of September 11. The issue of sincere genres or representations raises additional problems when the representations concern traumatic events, for it is often said that survivors of trauma lack the ability to resolve their experiences through representation. They relive the traumatic event without mediation.

The two texts, a report and a documentary, attempt to work through the suffering caused by the events. Both genres appear to confirm sincerity, but both texts are also paradoxical. Their paradoxes are, however, of a different nature, because their affective sincerity effects derive from very different post-traumatic symptoms. Young concludes that both texts are,

and are not, sincere. The sincerity effect turns out to be conditional upon the sincere, that is, implicated in it. In the limit-case of texts occasioned by the legacy of trauma, we have reached the aporia of sincerity.

But as with rhetoric, considering sincerity a media effect does not make it any less culturally powerful; hence, far from being dismissed, it must be taken extremely seriously. In the next chapter, Maaike Bleeker does just that, in proposing a literal sense of theatricality and performance to come to grips with sincerity as a media effect with political ramifications. She argues for the potential of theatricality for the analysis of sincerity as a performance of authenticity and truth. Instead of equating theatricality with mimetic inauthenticity (as the Oxford English Dictionary does), and therefore in opposition to what is true and authentic, she proposes to understand theatricality in terms of a destabilization of the clear-cut distinction between true and false. Theatricality is not a matter of spectacle, exaggeration, or make-believe, but instead denotes those moments in which we become aware of how we are implicated within what appears to us as true or false. Theatricality points to the relationship between the performance of authenticity and a culturally and historically specific point of view. This makes theatricality an ambiguous pointer since it relocates truth and authenticity, at least partly, in the eye of the beholder.

The final chapter shifts this discussion to a smaller scale in order to make this view of sincerity available for more detailed cultural analyses. It proposes a "sincerity genre." Reindert Dhondt focuses on the desire of "tout dire" (Sade) as a literary conviction that paradoxically seems to undermine veracity in the autobiographical works of the Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas (1943–1990) and the French author and photographer Hervé Guibert (1955–1991). At the end of their lives, both authors committed to paper their own private lives and those of their intimate circle, in a desperate attempt to write against time and death—the time of death. Like Michel de Montaigne, who defined his *Essais* as a project to describe himself "totally naked" (*tout nu*), Arenas and Guibert seem to reject all artificial masquerade in order to provide a truthful and adequate self-portraiture. Nevertheless they cannot refrain from providing a fictional and fictitious *veritas* because their writing is mannered, bent, and at times even baroque or grotesque. Although the two authors assert the right to say *everything* according to the truth in order to conclude an "autobiographical pact" with their

readers, they probe the limits of sincerity not only by a stylistic extravagance, but also by an excessive disclosure of their personal past.

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Together, the essays in this volume offer a double vision. First, they propose a cultural-historical analysis of the notion of sincerity. They explain why the concept emerges in Western culture with specific meanings and ramifications. But such an analysis is also a *démasqué* of the notion. At the same time, this analysis does not turn the concept of sincerity into a museum piece: it remains in use. Sincerity has an incredible resilience, which necessitates two further steps. On the one hand, it is necessary to bracket, or even actively refuse, sincerity where it would otherwise continue to exert its oppressive potential. On the other hand, the state of the world in which the opposite of sincerity continues to function—thanks to the rhetoric of sincerity—requires a new theorization of the concept. Within this new theorization the issue of sincerity is no longer one of "being" sincere but of "doing" sincerity. The way in which one deploys media can be sincere, or not. This openness shifts the status of the concept; it goes some way toward protecting it against a dualistic perspective of rights and wrongs, thereby facilitating a more complex and productive critical analysis.