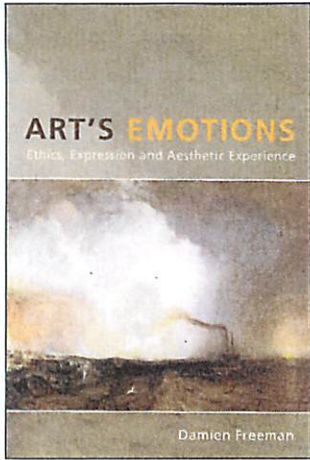


DAMIEN FREEMAN, *Art's Emotions: Ethics, Expression and Aesthetic Experience* (Acumen, 2012, x + 210 pp).



Everyone is familiar with the story of the man from the backwoods who stood up in the theatre and shot the villain on the stage. It cuts to the quick of the issue; of the difference between real-life experience and that derived from an enactment or a representation, from what Freeman refers to as aesthetic experience. This is surely one of the central problems in aesthetics which has confused far more sophisticated minds than that of the misguided member of the audience above; in the first few pages Freeman cites the difference between John Dewey's argument that 'aesthetic experience does not need to be conceived of as something fundamentally different from ordinary experience' and Kant's separation of it from practical life. To tackle these questions, and to go on to discuss 'the place of art in life as a whole' requires not only a formidable knowledge of philosophy and art, but a certain courage, 'where angels fear to tread'. Freeman has both, to a degree remarkable in a graduate student. (The book is based on his PhD dissertation.)

Among the debts Freeman acknowledges, one of the principal ones is to Richard Wollheim, whose recourse to psychology (and his experience of Kleinian psychoanalysis) lies at the heart of his explorations in *Art and its Objects* (1980) and *On Art and the Mind* (1973). In particular, Freeman's distinction between the perception of 'externalised properties' on the one hand and 'projective properties' on the other is derived from Wollheim's argument that the concept of expression 'at any rate as this applies to the arts, is indeed complex, in that it lies at the intersection of two constituent notions of expression' (quoted in a footnote, p 188). However, Freeman's own account of emotion in art and our experience of it is synthetic. In his conclusion, he retraces his steps to *Returning Home*, the masterpiece of Chinese art by Shih-t'ao (1642–1707) comprising poetry, calligraphy and painting with which he began, to 'appreciate why it is valuable to us as a work of art, and why its value as a work of art contributes to our flourishing'.

Described by one of his reviewers as 'a remarkably erudite, bold and fascinating exploration of the nature of emotion (and) the distinctive emotional impact of art,' it is, as Lopes writes, 'highly recommended reading for anyone who ponders why art matters.'

DDR

[In a covering letter to the editor, Freeman (2005) wrote of the importance he attached to conversations he had in College during his time as a member of the MCR.]