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Abstract title;  
Responding to the Moment

#### Abstract

Where should our interpretations begin, and how should they proceed? The danger of interpreting a film or a book or a play while under the influence of Stanley Cavell's writing is that we will simply apply the themes of his philosophy, for example, scepticism or acknowledgement. Using aspects of character and events as instances, we often end up producing accounts that are derivative and inert, and which utilise a conventional and predictable type of argumentation. This form of application and articulation is antithetical to what I take to be the penetrating aspect of Cavell's method which does not presume there is a self-evident way to approach a text or assume what a revelatory instance in a text might look like. Cavell is especially alive to those moments, often ignored by overarching thematic accounts eager to progress, that seem to be ordinary or straightforward, and which he reveals to be quietly mysterious. This approach is particularly telling with regard to film where the ordinary lucidity of film dramatisation means significance may be readily available but not immediately easy to see. For Cavell, a single dramatic action, a posture, a gesture, or a seemingly perfunctory line of dialogue triggers an open-ended investigation, and is unexpectedly fecund.