

# Review of: "The Ethics of Retraction"

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This is a rich and compelling article examining the import of retraction and its role as an ethically substantive tool or phenomenon. The subject of traces made me think of Derrida's work on the subject – particularly as it relates to memory, the absent present that can bring with it, and even the possibility of repetition (which is important – when retraction does not prevent the repetition of harm going forward).

I found the merging of speech act theory with an ethic of reparative action really compelling.

What is done when we retract – its pragmatic

Restorative justice 'repair relations', set them right

The state of affairs after retraction is different

This is a really compelling paper I thoroughly enjoyed reviewing in no small part for its novel approach to the philosophy of language, ethics, and my own interest in transformative justice. Its argument in favour of treating a retraction as a significant speech act that is complicated and powerful is persuasive. Rather than suggestions for revisions I have made a number of comments that might be helpful to the author. I would be happy to discuss them further.

1. The first thing that struck me was the question: what, substantively, is in that gap between retraction and success (could it be relations of power – race, gender, class, sexuality)?
2. Another thought was: who does what kind of labour to ensure retractions succeed (is it gendered?)? I'm speaking here specifically of the labour of a successful retraction.
3. The nature of new normative statuses that emerge after a retraction: This creates space for so much more work examining concrete cases in socio-political life (politicians specifically, celebrities, and of course in everyday life, in cases of racism, verbal gender-based violence, homophobia).
4. Social power and retraction of consent: Here power comes up for me again, particularly in relation to sex and the gendered pressure to not revoke consent. This perhaps is something to consider going forward.
5. In the example of a slur, I was struck by the author's clarity on the point of pain inflicted in the case of the use of a racial slur – where pain persists. I wonder if there is a temporal dimension of retractions that might be significant.
6. I thought perhaps the subject of affect, embodied resentment could figure into the article in some form and/or the lingering impacts of resentment.
7. I was struck by the insights around the scale of investment, relationality that shapes the difficulty of retraction/success conditions (perhaps for a future paper).
8. The following quote is really powerful (I am thinking specifically of politicians who retract): "It is true, on the other hand,

that often I can successfully retract an assertion even if I still have a warranted belief that it is true, because I don't want to be on the record as asserting it for whatever reason, or don't want to be held accountable for defending it." This then speaks to unethical retractions and lingering harms.

9. The condition that retractions might involve repair – and potentially forgiveness – is important and highlights implications for our unjust criminal justice system.

10. On the subject of self-care, the author might find it helpful to emphasise ethical as opposed to neoliberal self-care (where the former is rooted in community resilience) – perhaps drawing on Sara Ahmed (the possibilities for decentered personhood in this context) and Puig de la Bellacasa.

11. I appreciated the focus on building something new going forward (ethical worldbuilding) and making space for reconciliation (which brings me back to restorative/transformational justice).

I hope these comments are helpful and would be happy to discuss them further.