



**Uncertainty Principles:  
Ethical Considerations for Point of View  
In Disputed Narrative Territory**

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## **Abstract**

As writers create stories within fragile and contested territories, they are often confronted by difficult ethical questions. When the lives of people from different cultures, races and genders intersect, whose story should be told? Does the person of white, European ancestry have the right to tell his/her part of that story? Does a man have the right to tell a woman's story? If so, from whose point of view? If not, should stories be peopled only with one's own race, one's own gender? Must a person of mixed identity write only about one race, one ethnicity? If so, which one? What is the responsibility of the writer to create stories of the world she/he observes and lives in rather than the ideal one in which most of us would like to live? How does the writer construct writing practices that embody theoretical and ideological values without privileging polemic over artistic integrity?

These questions are not just philosophical for me as a writer. The answers determine what I will or will not permit myself to write, especially since I want to approach story-telling with a sensitive eye to the power of literature to show readers a world of diverse and intersecting experiences. This essay explores the responses to such questions by a number of highly respected international writers whose work has informed my writing. It also looks at the ethical use point of view as a strategy for entering the space of intersecting human experiences within contested geographic and political terrain.