

SILENCE AND SILENCING:
AESTHETIC RESPONSE AS THE IMPETUS FOR COMMUNITY FORMATION

By

Erin Cecilia Bradfield

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Philosophy

August, 2012

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Professor Gregg Horowitz

Professor José Medina

Professor Jonathan Neufeld

Professor Michael Kelly

Professor Boris Groys

Copyright © 2012 by Erin Cecilia Bradfield
All Rights Reserved

To Jim Wetzel, my first professor of philosophy, for guiding me towards the path of philosophical inquiry and for teaching me how to articulate my perplexity.

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the support of the Vanderbilt University Philosophy Department, the Writing Studio's Graduate Writing Fellowship, and the College of Arts and Science's Dissertation Enhancement Grant.

I am grateful for all the guidance and support my committee members, Gregg Horowitz, José Medina, Jonathan Neufeld, Michael Kelly, and Boris Groys gave me throughout the dissertation writing process. Thank you for your careful reading, insightful questions, and detailed feedback. My project would not have been the same without your input. I would especially like to thank Gregg Horowitz, the director of my dissertation and my long-time advisor at Vanderbilt University. Thinking with you has shown me the possibility of work that seems more like play when it is going well. Thank you for all of our philosophical discussions and for spurring my interest in Kantian aesthetics. Throughout the dissertation process, thank you for pushing me not only to find answers to difficult questions, but also for encouraging me to develop compelling questions that are worth asking and answering. Thank you for helping me to follow my arguments down unexpected and fruitful pathways and for helping me to find my own voice.

I want to thank my mother, Elizabeth, for giving me the gift of a well-rounded education at Colgate University and at Vanderbilt University. Thank you for letting me decide where to pursue my intellectual development – this has made all the difference. Thank you for encouraging my interest in the arts from a young age and for driving me to private cello lessons every week. Thanks also for letting me control the radio and tape deck on these trips. I miss our weekly quizzes on the latest bands!

I want to thank my brother, Justin, for talking with me about Nietzsche before I went off to college. Because I wanted a deeper understanding, I decided to take the “Philosophy of Religion: God and the Soul” first-year seminar. Even though I did not know it at the time, this was a pivotal moment and the first step on my philosophical journey. Thank you for reading chapters in progress and for taking an interest in my work. Thank you for all our conversations about Andy Warhol and Kant.

Finally, I want to thank Lucas. Thank you for always believing in me – I couldn’t have reached this milestone without your love and support! Thank you for sharing my love of philosophy from the very beginning when we met in Wetzel’s philosophy seminar. (Thanks again, Justin.) By being my continual interlocutor, you’ve helped me to become a better thinker and a better writer. I value all of our many conversations, and in particular, those about Plato, Kant, David Lynch, and Pedro Almodóvar. Thank you for whisking me off to see *Inland Empire* at the IFC upon landing at EWR and for knowing what this would mean to me. Finally, thank you for being my co-adventurer and partner and for being there at my defense.

Table of Contents

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Dedication | iii |
| Acknowledgements | iv |
| Chapter | |
| I. Art and Silence | 1 |
| I. Introduction..... | 1 |
| II. Kant and Wittgenstein on Expression | 4 |
| III. Meaning in Use: Enculturation and Meaning | 7 |
| IV. Wittgenstein’s New Boroughs: Rethinking Center and Margins..... | 12 |
| V. Gordon Matta-Clark’s New Boroughs: Englewood, NJ, <i>Splitting</i> , and the Limits of Expression | 22 |
| VI. David Lynch’s Liminal World: <i>Blue Velvet</i> | 30 |
| VII. Warhol’s Factory: Subculture in the City..... | 38 |
| II. The Unfulfillable Demand to Respond to Genius | 46 |
| I. Introduction..... | 46 |
| II. First Moment: Cognition and Aesthetic Ideas: The Objective and Subjective Moments of Aesthetic Response | 48 |
| Summary | 54 |
| III. Second Moment: Communication and Community: The Intersubjective Moment of Aesthetic Response | 55 |
| Summary | 68 |
| IV. Third Moment: The Cultural Moment of Aesthetic Response | 69 |
| A. Ingenious Complications..... | 69 |
| B. The Paradox of Genius: Cultural Champion and Cultural Enemy | 71 |
| C. Disciplining Nature (Part I): Taste Clips the Wings of Genius..... | 76 |

| | | |
|------|---|-----|
| | D. Dialectic of Taste | 81 |
| | E. Disciplining Nature (Part II): Purposiveness and Culture | 85 |
| | Conclusion..... | 96 |
| III. | Silence and Wing Clipping | 98 |
| | I. Introduction..... | 98 |
| | II. The Dionysian as a Lack of Wing Clipping | 101 |
| | A. Kant and Nietzsche..... | 101 |
| | B. The Political Dimension of Nietzschean Aesthetics..... | 108 |
| | C. Unrestrained Dionysus – Unclipped Genius | 111 |
| | D. Needcompany’s Dionysian Excess: A Case of Unclipped Wings | 114 |
| | 1. Language and Miscommunication | 115 |
| | 2. Reception of <i>Needcompany’s King Lear</i> : Unrestrained Dionysianism / Unclipped Genius..... | 122 |
| | III. The Avant-Garde as Moderate Wing Clipping: Bürger and Duchamp..... | 128 |
| | A. Introduction..... | 128 |
| | B. Bürger’s Avant-Garde..... | 129 |
| | C. “Dead” Fragments and the Limits of the Work: A Critique of Bürger’s Theoretical Wing Clipping | 134 |
| | D. Conclusion..... | 141 |
| | IV. Marcel Duchamp and the Case of Minimal Wing Clipping | 143 |
| | A. Introduction | 143 |
| | B. Duchamp’s Early Rejection: <i>Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)</i> | 145 |
| | C. A Pattern of Behavior Emerges: The Rejection of <i>Fountain</i> | 148 |
| | D. The Effects of Duchamp’s Wing Clipping: Playing at Giving Up Art, Alternative Exhibition Practices, and the <i>Boîte-en-Valise</i> | 156 |
| | E. Conclusion | 162 |
| IV. | Extreme Wing Clipping and the Multiplicity of Publics | 165 |
| | I. Introduction..... | 165 |
| | II. Publics and Counterpublics | 167 |
| | A. Introduction | 167 |
| | B. Publics | 168 |
| | C. Fraser and Habermas | 170 |
| | D. Alternative Publics, Counterpublics, and Cults | 175 |
| | III. Extreme Wing Clipping and the Public Sphere: | |

| | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| | Richard Serra's <i>Tilted Arc</i> | 183 |
| | IV. Benjamin's Notion of Cults | 193 |
| | V. Conclusion | 210 |
| V. | Cults and Subcultures..... | 212 |
| | I. Introduction..... | 212 |
| | II. Subculture..... | 214 |
| | A. A Return to Culture | 214 |
| | B. Subculture: Communication and Goals..... | 215 |
| | 1. Two Strategies for Cultural Response..... | 220 |
| | a. Noise, Opacity, and Interference: Disarmament Through Interpretive Devaluation | 221 |
| | b. Closeness to Culture and the Potential for Co-Optation | 226 |
| | 2. Summary | 229 |
| | III. Transition: Communication and Community Building in Cults and Subcultures | 230 |
| | IV. Andy Warhol, Reception, and Group Formation..... | 233 |
| | A. Warhol's Uncertain Beginnings: Cult or Subculture?..... | 234 |
| | B. Warhol's Factory Subculture..... | 241 |
| | Summary | 248 |
| | V. Gordon Matta-Clark | 249 |
| | A. Community Revitalization: Gordon Matta-Clark's Subculture | 250 |
| | B. Ephemerality and the Specter of Silencing..... | 260 |
| | Summary | 264 |
| | VI. David Lynch..... | 264 |
| | A. <i>Eraserhead</i> | 270 |
| | B. <i>Twin Peaks</i> | 277 |
| | C. Lynch's Cult and Aura | 286 |
| | VII. Coda..... | 290 |
| VI. | Conclusion | 295 |
| | Bibliography..... | 303 |

Chapter One

Art and Silence

I. Introduction

My guiding question is: how does silence mean in aesthetic experience and in communication about works of art? This inquiry involves the investigation of judgments of taste, the complications presented by works of genius, and the ways in which culture shapes both production and reception. Importantly, each of these conceptual perspectives on how we respond to the demands of art shows how silence and silencing foster disunity as a result of marginalization, as seen in the formation of cults and subcultures that are distinct from mainstream culture, and simultaneously strengthen and forge new associations of unity within those groups and within the exclusionary culture in question. As a result of difficulties in expression or meaning making, some persons try to find new communities or societies in which they will be accepted and understood. We must examine the various reasons for difficulty in expression ranging from the cognitive inability to fully process aesthetic ideas, to the social enculturation of meaning when sense is not shared by community members, to the tensions introduced by new ways of expression. These include, but are not limited to: the introduction of new words and phrases, new works of art, works of genius, avant-garde art, and cult or subcultural expression. We must consider how these new approaches to expression are related to silence and silencing.

Art makes unique demands upon the individuals who experience it. What are the demands set by art? What counts as an adequate response to them? Of primary interest to this investigation is the connection between art and silence. From the perspective of

reception, we are often silent in the encounter with art as a matter of concentration and convention. This holds in different media, whether in a concert hall where listening and sound are of paramount importance, or in a museum, gallery, or theater. In order to experience the work, we try to eliminate distractions in order to fully “take it in.” As a result, silence is an integral part of most of our aesthetic experiences. The exception, of course, regards happenings or events that openly invite audience participation in some fashion.¹ Such works call into question and blur the relationship between art and life, as Allan Kaprow puts it.²

Setting these explicitly provocative or boundary testing works aside for the moment, we must consider the way in which *all* art unsettles us and calls our expectations into question. The result of challenges set forth by art is often hesitation or silence on the part of the audience. Our conceptual resources through which we make sense of the world (and the art in it) are inadequate to our experience of art. We search (in vain) for a concept that will encapsulate the experience and help us make sense of the work and our relation to it.³ But we are thrown. Art outstrips our ability to express ourselves linguistically. Due to our nature as rational beings that inhabit the world in a social manner, we are driven to try to comprehend works of art and to communicate about them with others. Due to our proclivity for communication, we must examine what happens when we are unable to express ourselves effectively.

¹ Consider notions of guerilla theater, public or street performance, and improvisational art of all sorts. For an in depth discussion of modes of interaction with art, and in particular, how art requires the relationship between audience and work, see Nicolas Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics*. Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with participation of Mathieu Copeland. Dijon, France: Les Presse Du Reel, 1998.

² Allan Kaprow. *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*. Jeff Kelley, ed. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.

³ My general approach to aesthetic experience is Kantian in its bent. I will elaborate upon this frame in Chapter Two. Let us note here, that our conceptual resources are capable of expansion.

It is my contention that silence is a crucial aspect of aesthetic experience. The conventions of the observation of art established through training and practice require silence as a primary mode of response. Such behavior establishes membership in cultured communities.⁴ Beyond mere convention, however, the inability to fully comprehend and express our thoughts in reaction to a work of art silences individuals as they try to communicate. I argue that silence as response is an adequate and legitimate answer to the demands art sets forth. The trouble here is that silence may be mistaken for a lack of response, consideration, or contemplation on the part of the subject. In the chapters that follow, I establish the crucial role that silence and silencing play in understanding and communicating about art. While it may seem to indicate a lack, I examine cases in which silence is saturated with meaning.

Because silence is multivalent, how can we unpack its content or meaning? For instance, how can we distinguish between silent observance that is a matter of decorum and situations in which we are actively *silenced* by art? How can we distinguish between silence that is full of meaning – full of cognitive activity and the striving to comprehend a work – and silence that indicates a lack of interest or a lack of response? Clearly this is no easy task. However, the sorts of expressions we try out when confronted with challenging works are perhaps the best indicators of the significance of the silence in question. While our conceptual resources may not at first be adequate to the meaning of the work and our judgments about it, new aesthetic and linguistic expressions will emerge in order to meet these needs and fill in the gaps in expression. Therefore, the introduction

⁴ For an in depth discussion of the formation of aesthetic communities and their conventions see Jürgen Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.

of new ways of meaning making and the expansion of our conceptual resources are crucial to the investigation at hand – both in terms of the needs that give rise to new expressions and to the manner of their fulfillment and uptake.

II. Kant and Wittgenstein on Expression

Kant's concept of genius and Wittgenstein's metaphor of new boroughs of language both address the expansion of expression to meet new needs in meaning. While the differences between the philosophies of Kant and Wittgenstein may seem to render the joint use of them problematic, there is a productive confluence of their philosophies regarding the difficulties involved in the introduction of new expressions. At first blush, Kant's focus upon subjectivity and judgments in the *Critique of Judgment* seems to present an individualized account of taste. For instance, according to the doctrine of the transcendental unity of apperception, subjective experience is unified by the fact that there is an "I" who experiences it.⁵ And we each feel the need to experience and judge works of art for ourselves and to communicate our judgments to others. In fact, on Kant's account, we are driven to seek the *agreement* of others as regards our judgments. Trusting in the judgment of others is never enough to establish our own taste. Instead, we seek to communicate our judgments to others and to demand agreement about them. As Kant states, "[o]nly in *society* is the beautiful of empirical interest."⁶ Judgments of taste are social matters that carry normative weight in the community. Our experience of art is

⁵ Immanuel Kant. *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003., A 105-130, B 130-146. Kant reorients our understanding of the fit between mind and world and asserts that the mind shapes our experience of the world.

⁶ Kant, §41, p. 163, 296, emphasis in original.

not complete until we communicate our pleasure or displeasure to others, at least imaginatively.

This demand for agreement is also seen in Wittgenstein's linguistic theory. For Wittgenstein, however, agreement in judgment and use are actually agreements in form of life.⁷ The very *meaning* of expressions depends upon agreement and repetition in use. Language only becomes meaningful when it is valued and utilized by others in a social context. There is no such thing as private meaning for Wittgenstein. In fact, he has no notion at all of a transcendental subject who is the master of her experience. This displaces or even sidelines the subjective dimension of meaning. As Janet Farrell Smith articulates the point, we are not the "owners" of our experience; we are not proprietary subjects.⁸ For Wittgenstein, our experience of the world is developed through social enculturation into language established through repetition and agreement in use. The intersubjective and social dimensions of expression are crucial to meaning for Wittgenstein because of their importance to use.

Although Kant and Wittgenstein do not share the same view on consciousness and the role of subjective experience, their juxtaposition will help highlight the interconnection of the individual, social, and cultural aspects of expression. Wittgenstein's contextual and intersubjective model of expression will help us tease out the social elements that are already present (but sometimes overlooked) in Kant's account of taste. I do not aim to address the disagreements of the two philosophers, or to make claims about which philosophy is "right." Instead, with questions of the expansion of

⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Third Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001., §241 and 242.

⁸ Janet Farrell Smith. "'No Master Outside Or In?': Wittgenstein's Critique of the Proprietary Subject." In *Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein*. Ed. Naomi Scheman and Peg O'Connor. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002.

expression in mind, I put Kant and Wittgenstein into conversation in order to construct my own perspective on aesthetic expression and response based upon elements inspired by both. With the personal and interpersonal dimensions of expression in play, we can address responses to art, including silence and silencing, on a social and cultural level.

I begin the analysis in this chapter with Wittgenstein's treatment of language competence as socially enculturated.⁹ The investigation of the use of language as a determinant of meaning is crucial to understanding other forms of expression and communication, particularly aesthetic expression and judgments of taste. Put another way, this portion of the argument will help us understand how communication of an everyday variety is suffused with social and cultural concerns. The investigation of social and intersubjective linguistic dimensions of expression will provide an important foundation upon which to build arguments regarding more specialized modes of expression in Chapters Two through Five. In these chapters, aesthetic expression of various sorts, especially ingenious, avant-garde, cult, and subcultural expression become the central focus.

In the next section of argument, utilizing *Philosophical Investigations*, and to a lesser degree, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, I show how linguistic expression shapes the way we inhabit the world, and thereby affects our "form of life" as Wittgenstein puts it. According to Wittgenstein, language and life are intertwined. The customs we develop, the practices we participate in, and how we (choose to) express ourselves indicate something essential about who we are as individuals. Context plays a deep role in how we make meaning and live with one another in linguistic communities.

⁹ For the purposes of this section, I will focus on linguistic expression as understood by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*.

Therefore, as I argue in the next section, our use of language reveals something deep about our community and cultural affiliations and identities.

III. Meaning in Use: Enculturation and Meaning

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein develops his notion of language as “meaning in use” in accord with the notions of rule following and custom by enmeshing meaning and its social establishment. On that basis, Wittgenstein raises the issue of the separability of meaning and interpretation. His imaginary interlocutor starts the section with a query regarding rule following. He ponders:

‘But how can a rule shew [sic] me what I have to do at *this* point? Whatever I do is, on some interpretation, in accord with the rule.’ – That is not what we ought to say, but rather: any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning [...] Let me ask this: what has the expression of a rule – say a sign-post – got to do with my actions? What sort of connexion [sic] is there here? – Well perhaps this one: I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way, and now I do so react to it [...] I have further indicated that a person goes by a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom.¹⁰

Wittgenstein asserts that the rules of a language game are social constructs that only have meaning insofar as the members of a community recognize and follow them regularly.

The recognition of rules, or “sign-posts” as Wittgenstein calls them, requires training and habituation on the part of language users. Once followed consistently, these signs become “customs” of meaning; customs of repeated use concretize and legitimate the meaning of a word or phrase. An expression becomes socially established and regarded as meaningful within a community when individuals use it to communicate with one another. Put another way, meaning is determined by and intertwined with use. Meaning

¹⁰ Wittgenstein, §198, emphasis in original.

and interpretation, by contrast, are dissociated by Wittgenstein in a radical way. Meaning cannot lie in an individual's particular manner of interpreting a gesture or expression.¹¹ Instead, it is a communal affair.

As a result of such reasoning, Wittgenstein advances the notion that language is thoroughly dependent upon social constructions, interactions, and usages of words and phrases.¹² In order for a given word, phrase, or gesture to have meaning in the Wittgensteinian sense, one's expression must be received and understood by one's fellow interlocutor. Such understanding, upon Wittgenstein's account, stems from the repeated practice or use of a word or phrase in a recognized language game. Repetition and habit establish an expression's place in the language game and broader social context as that which has meaning and purpose. Therefore, meaning in the Wittgensteinian sense is not a private affair. Instead, it is based upon the social or intersubjective dimension of communication. The question of how much agreement or repetition is required to establish a comprehensible meaning arises even at this early stage of the argument. Let's put this issue on hold and return to it during our discussion of the new boroughs of meaning.

Wittgenstein recognizes the existence of a multiplicity of interpretations that an individual may advance in response to a statement or gesture. He states, "[i]nterpretations by themselves do not determine meaning;" they can only "hang in the

¹¹ Although Wittgenstein is dealing with interpretation rather than meaning here, one might argue that this passage lays the groundwork for the Private Language Argument in §243-363. Saul Kripke makes a version of this claim in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. In this work, he suggests that the PLA begins as early as §193, which is usually classified as part of the "rules and rule following" portion of the *Investigations*. He argues that §193-242 is the primary exposition of the PLA, while §243 onward is the reiteration and development of this earlier argument. See Saul Kripke. *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

¹² *Ibid.*, §198, 202, 208.

air,” without providing support.¹³ Support for meaning must come from social use and establishment. So even though an interlocutor can produce several interpretations of another’s (or her own) statement, this by no means suggests that all interpretations are equally accurate with respect to what the first individual actually *intended* to express or communicate.¹⁴ For instance, miscommunication could be due to: a failure on the part of the speaker to clearly express the intended sense, so that the thought she had in mind to communicate may not be properly interpreted by her interlocutor; a failure on the part of the interlocutor to interpret even the well expressed message; a new expression that is not yet comprehensible because its meaning has not been socially established and thus, is not shared; or some combination of such factors. Thus, although agreement on usage dictates meaning, interpretations must be defended or given further evidentiary support.¹⁵

Wittgenstein combines his notions about language and communication with the social manner in which humans inhabit the world. He states: “It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.”¹⁶ In this statement, Wittgenstein connects meaning in use, custom, and practice, and claims that how we utilize language to communicate with others shapes and even constitutes our “form of life.” Put more strongly, the language we use determines who we are and is part of our way of being both individually and socially.

¹³ Individual interpretations by themselves cannot determine meaning. There must be social enculturation and agreement in use in order to establish a meaning as acceptable.

¹⁴ For a more radical approach to this issue, see Roland Barthes’s essay, “The Death of the Author” in *Image / Music / Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. Barthes goes farther than Wittgenstein in separating intended meaning and interpretation. According to Barthes, “To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing.” (p. 147). Each reader brings her own impressions and experiences to the text. For this reason, there is no fixed or definite interpretation of a work. Even though Barthes draws a distinction between spoken and written expression, we might nonetheless consider the way in which new linguistic expressions need to be disentangled just as texts do because of the potential for multiple meanings.

¹⁵ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §198, 199, 201, 208.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, §241.

Wittgenstein elaborates upon the connection of language and value with the statement: “If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments.”¹⁷ Wittgenstein enmeshes language and judgment, intimating the normative dimension of expression. Whether we are fully conscious of the values inherent in our statements or not, our language is value-laden. Because community formation is bound up with the language we use, it is also bound up with normativity.

The language we use shapes our personal and community identities. Communities generate and maintain meaning in an important fashion. Because we aim to establish a community of shared linguistic meaning and value,¹⁸ agreement between members determines the meaning of words and phrases and secures their vitality for us. Thus, agreement in judgment and in language has important political implications.¹⁹ The safeguarding of expressions is proportional to the value the meanings have for the community in question. For Wittgenstein, norms of meaning are norms of assent (and dissent). Wittgenstein’s argumentative move towards agreement and safeguarding within communities is analogous to the Kantian demand for assent to judgments of taste. We demand that a cultured community of meaning or understanding be established with respect to works of art. While disagreement is certainly possible, individuals continue to

¹⁷ Ibid., §242.

¹⁸ In Chapter Two, I explore this point in connection with the development of aesthetic communities and Kantian taste. I draw upon Jerome Kohn’s article, “Kant’s Common World” to fill out this argument. See Jerome Kohn. “Kant’s Common World.” *Raritan* 22 (3) (Winter 2003): 102-113.

¹⁹ Here, I am using political in the sense of “community” or “polis.” The potential for exclusion that attends community formation is important to consider in the context of the social enculturation of meaning.

demand assent to their own judgments and ways of seeing and experiencing art.²⁰ They demand agreement in values.

Returning to Wittgenstein: instances of the contestation of value lead to further questions. What does it mean to share meaning through agreement in use? *Who* must share and how much? If meaning is socially enculturated, what happens when customs and cultures clash? What happens to meanings that are only shared and valued by part of the community or population? What if the conflict of judgment and value leads to problematic exclusions of words and expressions because of their inexpedience to those in positions of greater authority?

The influence of such individuals on what gets shared or valued among the community at large can be very great indeed. In fact, however, Wittgenstein doesn't discuss power or authority very much at all, despite the fact that he is interested in agreement in judgment and form of life.²¹ As contested meanings become more controversial, the influence of authority becomes all the more important. When individuals are unable to fully and freely express themselves in a given community or context, they may seek out an alternative site for meaning making and communication. Thus, cults, counterpublics, and subcultures emerge as alternative communities of meaning.²² After their initial moment of separation, these groups can either continue an "isolationist" existence apart from the central public, or they could try to reestablish

²⁰ I will return to these concerns in detail in Chapter Two.

²¹ Peg O'Connor makes a similar observation about Wittgenstein's avoidance of this issue in "Moving to New Boroughs: Transforming the World by Inventing Language Games." *Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein*. Ed. Naomi Scheman and Peg O'Connor. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002. On p. 441 she states, "Wittgenstein is remarkably silent about the uses and abuses of power by those institutions and individuals possessing authority. [...] There needs to be a much more sophisticated and sustained discussion of the operations of power. This issue of power is central to how oppressive backgrounds are maintained."

²² I will discuss these communities in detail in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

communication with or gain reentry into the cultural and linguistic center.²³ With these considerations of competing meaning and exclusion in mind, let us turn to Wittgenstein's image of new boroughs of language and the growing pains associated with the expansion of language and meaning.

IV. Wittgenstein's New Boroughs: Rethinking Center and Margins

Despite Wittgenstein's resistance to the possibility of critical private languages and meanings,²⁴ he accounts for the ability of language to expand in other ways. It is a living form, capable of change and innovation. As such, language transforms and expands to account for new needs and meanings that arise. Individuals change language through the words and phrases they use by introducing new meanings that serve new purposes (the additive model of the expansion of language) or by transforming current words and phrases through using them in new and sometimes subversive ways (the queer model of the expansion of language).²⁵ While a new word cannot enter into a context in which it has no basis – with no supporting language games or customs – language adapts to include new meanings that were not part of language before. It will be fruitful to ponder the tension Wittgenstein sets up here: If language is able to incorporate new meanings that did not exist at one point in time, and meaning is determined through customary use, what is required for a new meaning to become *meaningful*? Put in

²³ I will return to these issues in Chapter Four in connection with the work of Nancy Fraser on publics and counterpublics. The “isolationist” and “publicist” functions of counterpublics are crucial to understanding marginalized communities vis-à-vis the central public.

²⁴ See the Private Language Argument in *Philosophical Investigations*, §243-315.

²⁵ See José Medina. *Speaking From Elsewhere: A New Contextualist Perspective on Meaning, Identity, and Discursive Agency*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006.

Wittgensteinian terms, how many houses or streets does it take before a town begins to be a town?

To answer these questions, we must reexamine Wittgenstein's analogy between language and the structure of a city:

...ask yourself whether our language is complete; – whether it was so before the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of infinitesimal calculus were incorporated in it; for these are, so to speak, suburbs of our language. (And how many houses or streets does it take before a town begins to be a town?) Our language may be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.²⁶

Wittgenstein raises a question about the limits of language and its adaptability to new contexts and values. Is our language complete, he ponders? The answer is at once straightforward and complex. As long as language is a living form, it will continue to expand into new areas of meaning and value whether this means the addition of new words and phrases or the transformation of existing expressions. Therefore, our language is neither complete nor capable of completion as long as it is tied to an ongoing form of life.²⁷ Language adapts and expands to fit the dynamic needs of its community. The city center becomes labyrinthine as its current structures and usages are transformed to fit new ways of living and being. New boroughs can extend the reach of existing language games into new territories or make space for new meanings and language games that did not exist prior to some period.

²⁶ Ibid., §18.

²⁷ The dynamism of life and language prevents such completion. As circumstances change, new linguistic needs arise and are met by changes in language.

This promising depiction of language raises interesting questions: if language is socially constructed, and meaning thus lies in agreed upon use,²⁸ there will be junctures at which new meanings arise that cannot be communicated and understood by others. But how long will that recognition and agreement take? How long does it take for a city to become a city? Put differently, how many must agree on a meaning for it to be deemed meaningful? Or how many times? How long will it take for the outlying boroughs to gain enough structure to become distinct from, yet connected to, the city at large (i.e., language at large)? What if these new meanings never solidify into a borough, but instead, become the linguistic equivalent of a dead end street or a cul-de-sac?

While Wittgenstein is reluctant to pin down a specific timetable for such occurrences, he depends upon the foundation of “meaning in use” to begin to sketch an answer. In his discussion on the communication of private sense, he states:

Well, let’s assume the child is a genius and himself invents a name for the sensation! – But then, of course, he couldn’t make himself understood when he used the word. – So does he understand the name, without being able to explain its meaning to anyone? – But what does it mean to say that he has ‘named his pain?’ – How has he done this naming of pain?! And whatever he did, what was its purpose? – When one says ‘He gave a name to his sensation’ one forgets a great deal of stage-setting in the language is presupposed if the mere act of naming is to make sense. And when we speak of someone’s having given a name to pain, what is presupposed is the existence of the grammar of the word ‘pain;’ it shews [sic] the post where the new word is stationed.²⁹

In other words, whenever a new meaning emerges, its way must be duly prepared; a context must be established into which the new word or meaning is to fit. One can’t

²⁸ This consensus is not without challenge. In fact, the meanings that are agreed upon are always subject to revision based upon the needs of the community. As Medina puts the point, “Meanings are dynamic structures; and they cannot be rigidly tied to particular contexts and fixed once and for all [...] Our repetitive agency *reproduces and yet transforms* the consensus of action of our linguistic practices and meanings that emerge from that consensus. So in its performative regeneration, the consensus of action of language users is always being reconstructed and rearticulated.” See p. 27-28.

²⁹ Ibid., §257.

merely inject a word into a context in which it can have no meaning because meaning lies in use, customs, social settings, and practices. Put differently, the boroughs depend upon the city itself in order to have meaning; they rely upon the foundational meanings that have been established in the city at large.³⁰ Nonetheless, Wittgenstein also recognizes that established usages are subject to challenge and change as long as the dynamism of language and life remain intact. Again, this connection does not give us any sense of how long it will take for the various boroughs of language to be recognized as meaningful. Wittgenstein's hesitance on this point relates to the uncertainty about whether a new expression will become meaningful and therefore be incorporated into language or about how long this process might take. So what happens in the interim? What happens to new expressions that aren't yet recognized as meaningful? What is necessary for them to become socially established?

The incorporation of new meanings depends upon their value. If a community values the contribution an expression makes to understanding and communication, it adopts it as meaningful.³¹ If, on the other hand, it fails to adopt the expression, it is an indication that the community (or at least influential members of it) does not see the significance of adding this new meaning. However, failure to adopt an expression could

³⁰ This dependency relation brings to mind the "umbilical cord of gold" that connects the avant-garde to the monied center that Clement Greenberg discusses in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch." This line of argument relates to the problem of the avant-garde versus the vanguard, or, differently cast, between the center and the margins. This opens up avenues of further argument with respect to issues of censorship and marginalization. See Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* Fall 1939. Republished in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993.

³¹ I do not mean to suggest that this process is always a conscious one involving choice. Some new additions to language are assimilated without deliberation in the community. This interpretation accords with Medina's reading of Wittgenstein. He states, "[T]here is a constant rearticulation of discursive practices and restructuration of discursive contexts through an agency that is always, at some level, unconscious and nondeliberate. For our speech acts and the changes they produce in our practices are not driven by our conscious desires and intentions, but by life itself." See Medina, p. 189.

also be the result of powerful community members recognizing a meaning, but viewing it as inexpedient or threatening to the status quo. This active barring of meaning has serious implications for the addition of counter-cultural or controversial meanings that challenge the status quo. As such, the incorporation of new meanings is social and political in nature. Which meanings become customary or well established depends upon acceptance by the community in which they are introduced.

Let us return to Wittgenstein's analogy. At once pictorial and architectural, the depiction of language as an ancient and expanding city addresses community building and community life directly. However, the examples Wittgenstein provides regarding the expansion of language are not drawn from common practices. For instance, he turns to the introduction of symbolism in chemistry and notation in infinitesimal calculus for examples of the expansion of language.³² By focusing on very technical additions to language,³³ Wittgenstein seems intent on neutralizing questions of value and authority that are crucial considerations for the expansion of a city. But why? Wittgenstein seems both to face and skirt questions of community and value in this section of argument.

In the same passage when Wittgenstein ponders how many houses or streets it takes for a town to become a town, he brings the issues of life and value to the fore once again. Because chemistry and calculus language games do not raise much debate or concern among the general population, we must also consider examples that have more to do with value considerations. Peg O'Connor, for instance, raises the issues of silencing and reclamation of voice that attend the practices of "coming out" and "breaking silence"

³² Wittgenstein, §18.

³³ These technical and highly structured additions to language also show that the additive model of the expansion of language does not fully account for transformations of language through adaptive usage through queering.

about abuse.³⁴ Each practice is a difficult undertaking that may be met with resistance and cause emotional turmoil for the individuals who aim to express themselves in these areas. O'Connor argues that "the creation of new language games engenders new meanings" that can "enable people to make sense of their lives in ways that can be validating and liberating"³⁵ rather than isolating and discouraging. Because some communities or families are not open to revelations about homosexuality or abuse, individuals are often silent about formative aspects of their experience.

O'Connor claims that some language games form discourses which come into being in order to make public and visible unrecognized needs that have important political implications.³⁶ Utilizing Nancy Fraser's³⁷ notion of "oppositional discourses" O'Connor states:

They offer alternative interpretations, descriptions, and understandings of experience. By doing this, they challenge and undermine hegemonic worldviews. Oppositional discourses contribute to the crystallization of new social identities on the part of subordinated social groups. They can also lead to the adoption of new social identities. Oppositional discourses also provide a ground from which to challenge and undermine dominant language games and worldviews.³⁸

By giving voice to different experiences and understandings, oppositional discourses push and test the boundaries of the existing language. By subverting current modes of expression, oppositional discourses present an opportunity to adapt language to new needs that arise. This can occur through the transformation of the city itself, or through the expansion into new boroughs of expression. It is the latter of these two interpretations that O'Connor most closely endorses. She goes on to identify these

³⁴ O'Connor, p. 432-433.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 433.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 445.

³⁷ See Nancy Fraser's *Unruly Practices* for a detailed discussion of these issues.

³⁸ O'Connor, p. 445.

pioneering discourses as the new boroughs or suburbs of the city described by Wittgenstein. She continues:

Suburbs are not completely detached from the city, but they are clearly recognizable as different from the city. Because they are newer and in many ways more planned, for example, the streets are more uniform. In a similar manner, the meanings of words in an oppositional discourse will be more uniform and planned. What happens, though, is that as other people make use of these same words and phrases and begin to apply them to situations other than the ones for which they were created, their meanings change. The meanings of words, as Wittgenstein constantly notes, are in their use. Who is using these words, in what circumstances they are being used, and for what purposes, all affect the meaning of these words. The ‘straight original’ meanings become twisty.³⁹

Here, O’Connor raises questions about the inclusions and exclusions that take place on the margins of the established city. As new space for meaning is staked out, it can still be poached and encroached upon by those in positions of power. Struggles to control meaning through use can turn into battles of co-optation and reclamation.⁴⁰ The new boroughs, by these lights, are the front line of the battle to establish and maintain meaning through both addition and transformation.⁴¹

I see the concepts of new boroughs, suburbs, margins, edges, and front lines as connected. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein utilizes the terms “new boroughs” and “suburbs” interchangeably, understanding them to mean areas that are

³⁹ O’Connor, p. 446. While O’Connor primarily promotes the additive model of the expansion of language, the end of this quotation reveals her interest in the queering model as well. The notion that “the ‘straight original’ meanings become twisty” suggests that she recognizes how transformation and adaptation figure into the dynamism of language.

⁴⁰ Luce Irigaray deals with an alternative to co-optation and reclamation in *This Sex Which Is Not One*. When meanings are in jeopardy, particularly ones relating to identity, sometimes “mimicry” can be a powerful tactic. Here, individuals re-twist meaning to their own uses and thereby subvert expectations about meaning and identity. This most closely aligns with the queering model of the expansion (or protection) of language. The danger of this technique lies in reinscribing stereotyped behaviors instead of undermining them.

⁴¹ O’Connor’s work provides one example of contests of meaning based upon the encounter between language and value. For additional examples, see also Judith Butler’s *Excitable Speech*, in which she discusses the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell Policy,” or the current legal debates about the meaning of the term “marriage” in California and other states.

connected to the city at large (language at large) and yet distinct from it. In other words, these are the areas in which new expressions are tried out and new possibilities for meaning are explored. Taking new boroughs and suburbs as my starting point, I will expand into the investigation of the edges or margins of the city. This is particularly important on the meaning in use model, because the edges and margins show how inclusion and exclusion work to locate meaning and value in the linguistic city and thereby impact the lives of those living within it. The margins and edges are exciting places where new ways of living and meaning are explored, but these expressions and ways of life are not guaranteed incorporation into the city at large. Just as with the creativity and innovation of the avant-garde in aesthetics, activity at the linguistic margins may expand expression in significant ways. When combined with exclusions, these areas may become the frontline in the battle for meaning for expressions whose value has been contested.

The re-characterization of the new boroughs as the front line of battle brings me to another point about the organization of the borders and limits of meaning making. I must confess my own propensity to misremember Wittgenstein's picture of the city: I often think of the margins of the city as labyrinthine and free-wheeling spaces that adapt to the needs of the people and incorporate new interests and values into language. Logically, it takes time for these meanings to become regularized, consistent, and customary. For this reason, I imagine the city expanding without the strict need to form tight corners and neat byways. I imagine the new boroughs as places for experimentation

and ingenuity in structure, as places to try things differently than in the city proper. In short, I imagine the margins of the city as the home of avant-garde activity.⁴²

My interpretation of the new boroughs is of course belied by Wittgenstein's modernist vision of the city. His city expands into boroughs that are the most regimented and highly structured areas to be encountered. Recall the additions to language he proposes – symbolism in chemistry and notation in infinitesimal calculus. These additions are highly technical and structured contributions to the ongoing language games of mathematics and chemistry. These disciplines, let us note, are already highly organized; any new contributions must also be so. For Wittgenstein, the labyrinthine ancient city center expands into an increasingly ordered suburban area. As language expands on the Wittgensteinian model, it too becomes increasingly structured, ordered, and rule-governed. Returning to the battle metaphor, my perspective on the expansion of expression is influenced by the conception of the avant-garde as the leading edge of expression. At its introduction, such expression hasn't been regulated or co-opted by the center or vanguard yet. Instead, the avant-garde spreads its innovation from the outskirts by trying things out in a space that isn't as rule-laden as the city center.⁴³

⁴² Marjorie Perloff discusses one interpretation of the connection between Wittgenstein and the avant-garde in *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Perloff draws parallels between Wittgenstein's experience as a soldier in WWI and the avant-garde character of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. See in particular, p. 38-39. She does not carry this connection into the *Philosophical Investigations*, however.

⁴³ Admittedly, comparing the avant-garde to the frontline of a battalion is a bit complicated. In reality, the leading edge of warriors would be highly ordered and disciplined rather than free-wheeling. Perhaps it is the bravery and skill of frontline soldiers that I aim to connect to avant-garde artists. So too, the ancient city may not be as regular as suggested above. The city center would probably indicate the experimentation of its founding days, and the area directly surrounding it would be more structured and orderly before reaching the outskirts where experimentation begins again. On the other hand, we must also recognize that this experimentation and adaptation of meaning is an ongoing process. Thus, even the city center is marked by old and current experimentation. In part, this is why the city center is labyrinthine and "twisty" in Wittgenstein's conception.

As a complement to my “front lines” notion of innovation that occurs on and spreads from the margins, we must also recognize how the city center can be the home of innovation and transformation. The queering model of the expansion of language helps to account for this reading of Wittgenstein’s new boroughs. According to Medina,

Following Jane Braaten, [Naomi] Scheman (2002) argues that the city analogy identifies different ways in which linguistic innovations can result from our agency. As she puts it, ‘it is not only in the newly constructed outlying boroughs that change can occur; rather, moving around in the inner city in different ways can subtly reshape its face, even as we acknowledge the importance of the ancient and nondeliberate history embedded in the old walls and lanes’ (p. 10). This point about the different kinds of discursive agency that can lead to innovation can be further elaborated through a polyphonic interpretation of the city analogy.⁴⁴

The recognition of polyphony within the city and its boroughs parallels the multiplicity of individuals and communities living there.⁴⁵ In Chapter Four and Chapter Five, I explore this multivocality in more detail through an investigation of counterpublics, cults, and subcultures whose expressions are under pressure of exclusion. Because of their perceived subversiveness, these groups are often marginalized by culture. As a result, they manifest varying levels of openness to communication with culture from isolationism and internal communication to engagement and publicist communication.⁴⁶

According to Wittgenstein, the limits of language are the limits of the world.⁴⁷

These ideas about the expansion of meaning and language into new and uncharted territories force us to consider who stakes out new territories and lives at the limits of expression. Who lives in these new boroughs or competing communities of meaning? What sort of innovation occurs there? As threats to the dynamism of life and language

⁴⁴ Medina, p. 188.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 188.

⁴⁶ In order to make these distinctions, I utilize the work of Nancy Fraser and Robert Asen.

⁴⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. New York: Routledge, 2001., §5.6.

emerge, we must explore their implications for both individuals and communities. In the next section, I connect the architectural avant-garde ideas of Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978) with Wittgenstein's notion of new boroughs. Matta-Clark explicitly challenges customary modes of expression with his building cuts, thereby transforming current aesthetic practice. I argue that Matta-Clark's works explore the limits of expression by queering current modes and structures and expand aesthetic expression by contributing something new.

V. Gordon Matta-Clark's New Boroughs: Englewood, NJ, *Splitting*, and the Limits of Expression

“Why hang things on the wall when the wall itself is so much more a challenging medium? [...] A simple cut or series of cuts acts as a powerful drawing device able to redefine spatial situations and structural components [...] There is a kind of complexity that comes from taking an otherwise completely normal, conventional, albeit anonymous situation and redefining it, retranslating it into overlapping and multiple readings of conditions past and present. Each building generates its own unique situation.” – Gordon Matta-Clark, interview in Antwerp, 1977.⁴⁸

To make these connections about the limits of language and community, I want to turn to an artist for whom these issues are of central importance. Gordon Matta-Clark was an artist interested in bringing people together to share in a common experience and perspective. The majority of his works are built around the idea of involving others in his vision, in making visible a space, a situation, or a problem and addressing it in cooperation with others. That Matta-Clark invited individuals to physically occupy and traverse his transformed spaces or “building cuts” and participate in his projects reveals the relational and performative dimensions of his work. Matta-Clark contributed works that transformed current architectural structures and thereby expanded aesthetic practice.

⁴⁸ Thomas Crow, Corinne Diserens, Christian Kravagna, and Judith Russi Kirschner. *Gordon Matta-Clark*. Phaidon Press, 2003., p. 19.

In this way, we can see that Matta-Clark utilized both the additive and queer models of the expansion of expression. Building cuts are “sculptural transformations of abandoned buildings produced by cutting and dismantling a given architectural site.”⁴⁹ In this section, I argue that Matta-Clark’s art interrupts the degradation of community life occurring across the United States in the 1970s by bringing people together and building new relationships through aesthetic experience. The separation of persons caused by the exclusions of gentrification and eviction spurred Matta-Clark to foster community through participation in art. By doing so, Matta-Clark transformed current aesthetic practice and contributed new works that expanded the artworld.

The relation of persons and space, particularly space reorganized or reimaged through building cuts, presented an opportunity to revise or reorient views on place and community. New possibilities for meaning and living emerged as people experienced and moved through Matta-Clark’s building cuts. The ingenious use of buildings marked for demolition allowed Matta-Clark to reclaim spaces and create transitory beauty in the face of impending destruction. As Corinne Diserens notes, “With his ‘extractions,’ Matta-Clark, saw in hand and with a never ending energy, altered places, piercing edifice foundations, cutting into ceilings, walls, and floors. He restored seemingly doomed situations, reorganizing them into new, alternative forms of expression.”⁵⁰ Matta-Clark reimaged the possibilities of expression and literally opened up space for new meaning through his activities. In this section of argument, I investigate the expansion of community and the transformation of meaning presented in Matta-Clark’s work. When examining Wittgenstein’s question, “how many houses or streets does it take before a

⁴⁹ Pamela Lee. *Object to be Destroyed*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000., xii.

⁵⁰ Crow, p. 6.

town begins to be a town?,”⁵¹ we must ask ourselves what would happen if those houses *really* tested the boundaries of city and community. What if Wittgenstein’s new boroughs were occupied by Matta-Clark’s building cuts? What if Matta-Clark’s building cuts became part of the city center?

The focal point for answering this question is Matta-Clark’s 1974 work, *Splitting*. After performing building cuts in Genoa, Italy the year prior, Matta-Clark wanted to continue and to refine his practice in the United States.⁵² He acquired permission to alter the house used for the *Splitting* project from Holly and Horace Solomon, his art dealers and the owners of the property. The house, located in Englewood, NJ, “a banal thing in a decrepit neighborhood,”⁵³ would become more than the home from which its former tenants had been evicted,⁵⁴ and more than the value of its soon to be vacant lot. In between residence and land speculation, 322 Humphrey Street would become a work of art that raised questions about home and community life. It is important to note that the house offered by the Solomons was not in an upscale area:

The property was a suburban one, but not an instance of the comfortable affluence that the word normally conveys. New York, like many major cities abuts a ring of decaying, lower-density jurisdictions, whose residents once served more prosperous commuters or worked in light industries fleeing congested urban confines. The forlorn dwelling at 322 Humphrey Street in Englewood, which the Solomons planned to demolish later, lay squarely within such a precinct.⁵⁵

While we might not consider this location to be a new borough, it is nonetheless on the outskirts of New York City rather than part of the city proper. In this case, the marginality of the Humphrey Street property took on a different meaning. By all

⁵¹ Wittgenstein, §18.

⁵² Matta-Clark’s Genoa works include *A W-Hole House: Atrium Roof* and *A W-Hole House: Datum Cuts*.

⁵³ Lee, p. 11.

⁵⁴ Crow, p. 74.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

accounts, the house was by turns banal, pathetic, ill-maintained, or in gross disrepair. Such descriptions paint a picture of a neighborhood or community that is falling apart – or being forced apart, as the eviction of the residents in this case shows. The specter of gentrification looms in the background here, as might be inferred from the Solomons’s intent to destroy the house in order to take advantage of property values after Matta-Clark’s project had run its course.

Matta-Clark recognized the competing notions of community that were at stake in gentrification projects. Areas with low-income housing that cities or states want to “clean up,” improve, rehabilitate, and make safe are sites that are often selected for the re-imagining of community. This ultimately means, however, that the new community is *purely* imaginary, and often does not include the current residents. Thus, such projects reveal underlying racist and classist motivations because “improvement” is achieved by displacing current residents for other, more acceptable, ones. Gentrification often promotes one community and its interests over those of a disenfranchised or underprivileged group of people. Such projects do more to reinforce differences and to drive people of different backgrounds apart than to bring them together.

Through the controlled destruction and manipulation of the architecture of the house in *Splitting*, Matta-Clark made this split physical. Matta-Clark began the project by moving the former occupants’ remaining possessions and cast-offs into the basement without going through what he called the “fragmented biographical garbage heap.”⁵⁶ “He then cut two parallel, vertical lines through the middle of the building with a chainsaw [...] With the assistance and knowledge of Manfred Hecht [his partner on the project]

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 18. The quote is from an interview between Gordon Matta-Clark and Liza Bear in *Avalanche*.

[...] Matta-Clark set to tipping the house back on its foundations.”⁵⁷ Using beveling tools and building jacks, Matta-Clark eventually lowered the building, finishing its bisection in a dramatic fashion.⁵⁸ Thomas Crow recounts the details of the process as follows:

Keeping one end of the balloon-frame superstructure propped up on jacks, Matta-Clark and his helpers beveled down the cinderblock foundation at a 5 percent grade from the point of the split to the rear of the house, where the base was lowered by a full foot. Then, gingerly lowering the jacks, they were able to make one half of the house rock gently back to rest on the descending incline (‘like a perfect dance partner’) and the narrow split at the center widened into a wedge open to the sky.⁵⁹

The movement of the building, or what Matta-Clark referred to as “the realization of motion in a static structure,” and the movement of people through the work, were both required for *Splitting* to be fully actualized.

For this reason, Holly Solomon organized a bus tour from New York so that people could see, experience, and participate in the work in person.⁶⁰ Sculptor Alice Aycock recalls: “Starting at the bottom of the stairs where the crack was small, you’d go up, and as you’d go further up, you’d have to keep crossing the crack. It kept widening as you made your way up to the top, the crack was one or two feet wide. You really had to jump it. You sensed the abyss in a kinesthetic and psychological way.”⁶¹ In order to experience the work fully, the audience must be present to witness the sun as it changes position throughout the day and to see how it illuminates the space differently.

According to Richard Nonas, “Gordon’s work...needed, in fact, to be inhabited [...]

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵⁹ Crow, p. 77. The quote is from an interview between Gordon Matta-Clark and Liza Bear in *Avalanche*.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 77.

⁶¹ Lee, p. 29.

needed to be populated, to be lived in, walked through, experienced and not just seen or understood.”⁶² The performative dimension of Matta-Clark’s work indicates the need for active participation in his art.

One might recast the notion of participation in Gordon Matta-Clark’s work by combining it with ideas of play and use: “That Matta-Clark referred to his principle activity as ‘unbuilding’ points to the ways in which he was confronting the logic of artistic as well as architectural production. In contrast to an artistic ‘work’ he offered instead a kind of artistic *play* – an idea of art as practice or use.”⁶³ This formulation has particularly Wittgensteinian resonance in that Matta-Clark helped renegotiate the meaning of buildings and spaces through reimagining their use. Again, this shows that Matta-Clark altered aesthetic expression by transforming or queering existing structures. Put another way, Matta-Clark took buildings that had fallen out of use and gave them new purpose. He transformed condemned or abandoned structures into works of art, restoring the buildings by giving them “purposiveness without a purpose,” to borrow a Kantian phrase. Both of these formulations allow us to consider how reimagined and reconfigured structures can serve as the focal point for gathering and the establishment of community. As Pamela Lee writes, “the artist posed a larger sense of community against the alienation of modern housing his work assailed. For Matta-Clark, the participation, social, and inclusive ritual of art making was understood as a democratic solution to the ‘state of isolationism’ engendered by urban and suburban space.”⁶⁴ Bringing people together in order to experience space and place in a new way, through re-imagining the

⁶² Crow, p. 134.

⁶³ Lee, p. xiii.

⁶⁴ Lee, p. 164.

limits of a structure and how persons relate to it, builds community and participation. Through such projects, Matta-Clark established new meaning through use.

But the demand for participation and movement in deconstructed spaces was sometimes a dangerous dance for audience and collaborators alike, as Horace Solomon recalls: “After it had been cut I felt nervous being in the house, I thought it would collapse at any minute. I really didn’t enjoy being in it, though I loved the way it looked from outside, and liked standing back and looking at it.”⁶⁵ Matta-Clark’s partner on the *Splitting* project, Manfred Hecht, felt the tension of the work, but had a different reaction to it: “It was always exciting working with Gordon – there was always a good chance of getting killed. That’s what I liked.”⁶⁶ Or as Holly Solomon commented about 1975’s *Day’s End*, “I remember when I saw the piece for the first time, it reminded me of the first moments of seeing a Michelangelo, of being in a cathedral with flying buttresses and light-stained glass. Yet I was also afraid. I was afraid to cross the cut he made in the floor; I’m afraid of heights. He made a small handrope for me and other people who were fearful.”⁶⁷

Some interpretations of Matta-Clark’s work bear out these concerns of endangerment by viewing the cuts as acts of violence. Because the object of this cut was a house – a dwelling, a home – *Splitting* was harshly criticized, particularly by feminists. Some accused Matta-Clark of a “misogynistic [...] violent attack against the domestic order gendered as feminine” and of “out and out rape” on the house.⁶⁸ But Matta-Clark wanted persons to participate in this space, to walk through it and experience it before its

⁶⁵ Crow, p. 140.

⁶⁶ Crow, p. 77.

⁶⁷ Lee, p. 130.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

destruction, which contradicts this violent reading of *Splitting*. He wanted to draw attention to the disintegration of community that occurs along with the eviction of persons and to simultaneously bring community together around and through this issue. As Les Levine points out, “The metapsychology of Gordon’s art was to embrace the abandoned. He worked in old buildings, neighborhoods in a state of rejection. He would nurture a building that had lost its soul.”⁶⁹ Through reclaiming forgotten spaces, Matta-Clark cared for and reawakened them. By making such sites visible and vital again, Matta-Clark sought to enliven community. As Lee notes, “the dissipation of communities and the demolition of site served as the generating principles of much of Matta-Clark’s work, and were its objects of critique.”⁷⁰ In nurturing abandoned buildings marked for demolition, and making visionary cuts, Matta-Clark opposed the violent destruction of spaces and opened the possibility for reinterpreting them as vital and meaningful once again.

As I have argued, Gordon Matta-Clark showed us a way to understand the possibilities of transforming and expanding meaning and use through reclaiming abandoned or condemned spaces located at the margins of the city. Through his ingenious building cuts, he exposed forgotten or forlorn spaces and made them visible again. Works such as *Splitting* forced individuals to reexamine the conditions of their communities. Space and place were made visible through Matta-Clark’s transitory beautification projects, often with demolition crews waiting in the wings to swing the wrecking ball. In particular, because some of the buildings he altered were emptied because of evictions, Matta-Clark’s projects made visible the displacement of persons

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 162.

and the attendant disintegration of communities. Such problems were given new attention in Matta-Clark's work. He transformed everyday or commonplace decaying structures that wouldn't cause a second thought or a second look into extraordinary spaces that generated awareness and community through the innovative reorganization of space and the movement of persons through it. In Chapter Five, I explore the particular type of community that Matta-Clark garnered with his work. In the next two sections of this chapter, I examine the work of David Lynch and Andy Warhol. Each artist explores the boundaries of meaning and use through their innovative and exemplary art. As a result of their investigation of limits and borders, these artists have transformed and expanded aesthetic expression.

VI. David Lynch's Liminal World: *Blue Velvet*

Matta-Clark's building cuts are but one way to conceive of the expansion and transformation of expression. What else (and who else) occupies the periphery of expression? To answer this question, let us turn to an artist who we might consider Matta-Clark's neighbor: the filmmaker David Lynch. Both craft works that demand that we look closer at our environments, and often, that we critically examine them as socially and politically charged contexts. So too, both artists deal with issues of visibility and silencing – the places we usually can't go, and the words that are difficult to speak. In this section of argument, I examine how David Lynch's works treat the limits of expression, and more specifically, *pain* at the limits of expression. Because his films deal with borders and limits, Lynch's work is engaged with questions of inclusion and exclusion.

The films of Lynch allow a return to the Wittgensteinian notion of meaning in use and the metaphor of language as an ancient city with expanding boroughs. The first and maybe the most obvious connection is Lynch's interest in the shaping power of locations and spaces. Many of his films deal with conflicts in and between communities. From the beginning of his feature length career with *Eraserhead* and its depiction of urban decay and despair in Philadelphia, to the seemingly idyllic Lumberton in *Blue Velvet*, to the small Pacific Northwest town in *Twin Peaks*, to explorations of Los Angeles and Hollywood in *Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Drive*, and *Inland Empire*, location has been extremely important to establishing the tone of his narratives. While these locales may be rather disparate, Lynch's abiding interest in the exploration of places and how people inhabit them provides a crucial link between his films. What impact do cities, towns, and suburban-scapes have upon the lives individuals lead there?

Red roses pop against the white picket fence that simultaneously keeps out and keeps in. A fire engine drives by in surreal slow motion, complete with smiling fire fighters and Dalmatian aboard the truck. A crossing guard waves school children across the street with a glazed expression, at once friendly and somehow zombific. The lethargic speed of the action in combination with the swooning soundtrack (Bobby Vinton's "Blue Velvet") transforms the innocuous symbols of suburban life into a terrifying display. Overly saturated with color, these opening shots of *Blue Velvet* verge on the grotesque. They also foreshadow the grotesque's larger presence in this town and its presence even in the midst of the beautiful. The roses and fire engine are the color of blood. The clear robin-egg blue sky seems menacing, its pure color uncannily devoid of clouds. The environment is claustrophobic and threatening. A man in one of the yards

waters his lawn and the hose gets twisted up. He attempts to untangle it, and unexpectedly falls to the ground, clutching at his neck. Now set loose, a small dog attacks the water issuing from the hose with feral intensity. Captured in even slower motion, the ferocity of the dog, bearing its teeth while drinking the water, is alarming. From there, the camera navigates between blades of grass to uncover bugs teeming and grappling just beneath the surface of ground cover and dirt.

In *Blue Velvet*, Lynch asks us to look closer at our conceptions of small town life.⁷¹ Anthony Vidler observes in *Warped Space* that “[w]e seldom look at our own surroundings. Streets and buildings, even those considered major monuments are, in everyday life little more than background for introverted thought, passages through which our bodies pass ‘on the way to work.’ In this sense, cities are invisible to us, felt rather than seen, moved through rather than visually taken in.”⁷² Instead of separating the idealized 1950’s sugar sweetness of suburban life from the dangerous mysteries and degradation of the underworld, Lynch discomfotingly unites them.

To keep this uneasiness at bay, many critics try to decouple Lynch’s depiction of the “seedy underbelly” and idealized surface of the town as completely disconnected elements. They treat surface and interior as opposed to one another. I aim to resist such a reading by showing how Lynch views them as complexly enmeshed. Instead of depicting a false dualism of “appearance” / “reality” or “surface” / “interior,” Lynch exposes the ways in which these seeming opposites are intertwined through the edge,

⁷¹ This opening scene has left its mark on several films / directors. Most notably, Sam Mendes’s *American Beauty* takes up this opening quite explicitly mirroring the picket fences and rose bushes that are merely a tranquil façade. The main character, Lester Burnham has a clipping in his cubicle that reads, “*Look Closer.*”

⁷² Anthony Vidler. *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000., p. 81.

border, or limn.⁷³ Put more directly, Lynch is interested in how these surfaces and underbellies are actually part of the same body, each inextricably tied to and enmeshed with the other. The “underworld” elements aren’t foreign to the rest of existence in a Lynchian universe; they are constitutive of it.

This view of the relationship between good and evil unsettles many viewers. As David Foster Wallace states in “David Lynch Keeps His Head”:

I’m going to claim that evil is what David Lynch’s movies are essentially about and that Lynch’s explorations of human beings’ various relationships to evil are, if idiosyncratic and Expressionistic, nevertheless sensitive and insightful and true. I’m going to submit that the *real* ‘moral problem’ a lot of us cinéastes have with Lynch is that we find his truths morally uncomfortable, and that we do not like, when watching movies, to be made uncomfortable. (Unless, of course, our discomfort is used to set up some kind of commercial catharsis – the retribution, the bloodbath, the romantic victory of the misunderstood heroine, etc. – i.e. unless the discomfort serves a conclusion that flatters the same comfortable moral certainties we came into the theater with.)⁷⁴

As Wallace points out, most Americans like their films to be morally tidy and uncomplicated.⁷⁵ Lynch’s films, however, deal with what Irena Makarushka refers to as the “ambiguity of evil.”⁷⁶ His characters are not easily defined as wholly “good” or “evil.” They are often torn, conflicted, complicated; in other words, Lynch’s characters are all too human.⁷⁷ Location is especially important on this score. Most people want to believe that their seemingly tranquil town is impervious to crime or intrigue; we have a

⁷³ I will return to this point in a moment.

⁷⁴ David Foster Wallace. “David Lynch Keeps His Head.” In *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1997., p. 203, emphasis in original.

⁷⁵ Consider, for example, the color-coded morality of old Westerns. The good guy wears white, the bad guy wears black, etc.

⁷⁶ Irena Makarushka. “Subverting Eden: Ambiguity of Evil and the American Dream in *Blue Velvet*.” *Religion and American Culture* 1 (Winter 1991): 31-46.

⁷⁷ Lynch is also interested in various senses of doubling. Divided selves and Doppelgängers figure prominently in his films.

“that can’t happen *here*” mentality.⁷⁸ But as Lynch’s location choices show, struggles of morality can happen anywhere, whether in the suburbs or the “dream city” of Los Angeles. Put another way, Lynch’s films bring these questions of moral ambiguity home.

Let’s return to the opening sequence of *Blue Velvet*. This scene prepares the way for what is to follow: a study in contrasts, of surfaces and interiors, of the intertwinement of good and evil in small town American life. The presence of insects teeming and grappling in the dirt just beneath the surface provides the overriding leitmotif of the entire film.⁷⁹ Just as bugs live beneath the well-manicured surface, shady dealings and dangerous circumstances lurk just out of sight, or in this case, just beyond Lincoln Avenue. This is the border across which the protagonist, Jeffrey Beaumont, is told not to go. Mysterious circumstances prove too much for his curiosity, however. At first, Jeffrey appears to be an upstanding college student who has been called home due to his father’s illness – someone who cares for family and community. But he is drawn into a mystery when he finds a severed ear in a field.

Because Jeffrey traverses his suburban community and the underworld, we viewers are granted access to the forbidden zone as well. While he begins his quest with the best of intentions, first trying to solve a mystery and then trying to save a beleaguered woman, Jeffrey is drawn into a world of vice, kidnapping, abuse, sado-masochism, and

⁷⁸ Let’s note that such comments are often followed on television interviews about persons suspected of murder, with claims that, “he was such a nice boy.”

⁷⁹ Lynch is fascinated by dirt as an organic material. In an interview with Chris Rodley, Lynch states: “I like mounds of dirt – I *really* like mounds of dirt. When we were doing *Eraserhead*, Peggy and I lived with Jennifer in a single house in LA that was in a neat area but the house was pretty cheap. And it had a circular, wooden dining table. On her birthday, Peggy went out for some reason, and Jennifer and I started carrying in buckets of dirt. And we made a pile of dirt about four feet high on the dining room table, covered the whole thing in just a mountain of dirt, and then dug little tunnels into it and put little clay abstract sculptures in the front of the tunnels. And Peggy, bless her heart, was over the moon about it when she came home. So we left it there for months. And it ate the surface of the wood, you know, on the table, because it started going to work organically. So the veneer was pretty much toasted when we finally took it off. It was a neat sculpture.” *Lynch on Lynch*. Ed. Chris Rodley. London: Faber and Faber, 1997., p. 49.

drugs. He soon finds that merely casual entry into such a world is nearly impossible; Jeffrey begins to question everything he thought he once knew including his own allegiances, motives, and morals. The warning not to cross Lincoln Avenue, then, may be interpreted as both physical and psychical. The impact this liminal location has upon Jeffrey suggests that even proximity to this place is dangerous. As Vidler states, “the modern subject [is] caught in spatial systems beyond its control [...] Fear, anxiety, estrangement, and their psychological counterparts, anxiety neuroses and phobias, have been intimately linked to the aesthetics of space throughout the modern period.”⁸⁰ Jeffrey gets in over his head. His lack of self-control in the situation involving Frank Booth and Dorothy Vallens affects his behavior, both psychologically and morally.

To distill the point: Jeffrey’s morality is threatened as he turns away from trying to save Dorothy and instead begins to participate in her violent world.⁸¹ This transformation is expressed in terms of spatial mutations. Wallace picks up on this connection by stating:

The fact is that David Lynch treats the subject of evil better than just about anybody else making movies today – better and also differently. His movies aren’t anti-moral, but they are definitely anti-formulaic. Evil-ridden though his filmic world is, please notice that responsibility for evil never in his films devolves easily onto greedy corporations or corrupt politicians or faceless serial kooks. Lynch is not interested in the devolution of responsibility, and he’s not interested in moral judgments of characters. Rather, he’s interested in the psychic spaces in which people are capable of evil. He is interested in Darkness. And Darkness, in David Lynch’s movies, *always wears more than one face*. Recall, for example, how *Blue Velvet*’s Frank Booth is both Frank Booth and “the Well-Dressed Man.”⁸²

⁸⁰ Vidler, p.1.

⁸¹ This is most evident when Jeffrey consents to hitting Dorothy during sex.

⁸² Wallace, p. 203, emphasis in original.

To restate the point: the town beyond Lincoln Avenue is a space where Jeffrey is capable of evil, or at least, of abandoning his current system of judgment. And this turning is more frightening than the Janus face of Frank. Even as Frank dons the mask and becomes the “Well-Dressed Man,” we know where his allegiances lie. We have witnessed his monstrous behavior and know that he is responsible for kidnapping and abuse. Jeffrey and the crooked cop, on the other hand, embody the ambiguity of morality in *Blue Velvet*, and how capacity for evil can easily become actual evil. But as Wallace points out, Lynch isn’t interested in judging, let alone in condemning, these characters.⁸³ He does, however, want to set them in motion to see what happens when they are loosed on screen.

As we have seen, locations have the power to shape the lives of the individuals who inhabit them. In a certain way, this can be read as a spatialized version of the Wittgensteinian thought that value and use impact form of life, or put more strongly, *are* a form of life. Martha Nochimson makes the link between Lynch’s work and Wittgenstein’s metaphor of language as an expanding city more explicit. In the introduction to *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*, she states:

The development of Lynch’s body of work is informed by a realist’s optimism that there is an exit from the linguistic labyrinth and that this exit is richly available to us. [...] Lynch told me this, in so many words, confirming the interpretations of his films that I had evolved in the intervening years. His use of language – and of cinematic vocabulary – suggests that, once we understand that we ourselves have created cultural forms and that they only have the meaning we

⁸³ Ibid., p. 202. As Wallace puts it, “Moral atrocities in Lynch movies are never staged to elicit outrage or even disapproval. The directorial attitude when hideousness occurs seems to range between clinical neutrality and an almost voyeuristic ogling. It’s not an accident that Frank Booth, Bobby Peru, and Leland / ‘Bob’ steal the show in Lynch’s last three films, that there is almost a tropism about our pull toward these characters, because Lynch’s camera is obsessed with them, loves them; they are his movies’ heart.” See p. 202.

give them, we are free to understand the forces in the universe that are truly larger than we are and how they connect us to a greater reality.⁸⁴

Here, Nochimson articulates a version of the Wittgensteinian notion of language as a shared form of life. Meaning is established through agreement in the words we use and the meanings we attach to them. In the case of *Blue Velvet*, the suburbs are coded with the expectations Lynch lays out visually in the opening sequence. In this area, we expect picket fences encircling yards where the children will play in safety. We don't expect the degeneracy of human life and the degradation of morality. But because darkness wears more than one face, as Wallace points out, we erect an idyllic image of suburbia to protect us from what we already know exists there. While there isn't much wrong with an interest in safety, if it is valued over knowledge about our communities, it may be counterproductive. As long as we value such places, spaces, and ways of living, we safeguard their existence and their meaning for our lives at the cost of exploring differences and how they can enrich our lives.

As we have seen in this section, Lynch's films deal with liminal locations, characters, and subjects. As Wallace comments, their form is also liminal:

David Lynch's movies are often described as occupying a kind of middle ground between art film and commercial film. But what they really occupy is a whole third different kind of territory. Most of Lynch's best films don't really *have* much of a point, and in lots of ways they seem to resist the film-interpretive process by which movies' (certainly avant-garde movies') central points are understood. [...] The absence of point or recognizable agenda in Lynch's films, though, strips [...] [our] subliminal defenses and lets Lynch get inside your head in a way movies normally don't. This is why his best films' effects are often so emotional and nightmarish (we're defenseless in our dreams, too). This may, in fact, be Lynch's true and only agenda: just to get inside your head.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Martha Nochimson. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997., p. 4.

⁸⁵ Wallace, p. 170-171, emphasis in original.

This perspective on Lynch's liminality helps to explain some of the aforementioned difficulties involved in the reception of his works.⁸⁶ His cult is a community comprised of self-selecting individuals who are dedicated to trying to interpret and communicate about Lynch's film and television projects with one another. I will fill out this argument in Chapter Five. Because Lynch's films cross the boundaries of commercial and avant-garde art, his work is connected to that of Andy Warhol, the subject of the next section.

VII. Warhol's Factory: Subculture in the City

At the beginning of his career, Warhol worked between advertising, commercial, and fine art, or between low and high art. He published his first drawing of shoes climbing up a ladder for a story entitled, "Success Is a Job in New York" in a 1949 issue of *Glamour* magazine shortly after moving to New York City from Pittsburgh.⁸⁷ "[Warhol] started off illustrating stories in *Charm*, *Seventeen*, and *Mademoiselle* and drawing covers for Columbia Records."⁸⁸ In 1955, he received an important job with I. Miller Shoes to "update" their image in full and half-page ads in the *New York Times* Society pages. In spite of his success with advertising and commercial art, Warhol had difficulty securing an exhibition in the fine art world.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ In addition to having "sick" subject matter that sometimes makes individuals uncomfortable, audiences have trouble figuring out what Lynch's films *want* or what they're *getting at*. For this reason, his films are difficult both to categorize and to talk about. This complexity does not suggest that Lynch's films *have no point*, contra Wallace's intimations, but rather that audience members and critics will have to work hard to grapple with the unconventionality of Lynch films – alone and in conversation with others. Put in more Kantian terms, Lynch's films place heavy demands on the audience to respond.

⁸⁷ Stephen Watson. *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2003., p. 25

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25-26.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31. His first exhibition was in the window of Bonwit Teller's department store. Interestingly, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg had also designed windows for the shop.

Warhol continued to cross the boundaries of art and advertising throughout his career. According to David James, “[H]is first ‘real’ paintings were themselves used in his window displays; his breakthrough paintings were reproductions of ads; and throughout his life he made paintings or silk-screens of advertisements...”⁹⁰ James goes on to claim that Warhol was unique because of the entrepreneurial bent of his work. As Stephen Watson frames the point, Warhol displayed an abiding aspiration to be what he called a “business artist.”⁹¹ “For his was a career that was historically prototypical and prescient not because he engaged so many mediums, but because he engaged so many of them as an entrepreneur, carelessly crossing the ideological and functional boundaries of art itself, thus repudiating one of its most crucial criteria, its self-definition against advertising.”⁹²

In the sixties, Warhol’s boundary crossing would take a different turn as he set up his base of operations in a large building located on East 47th Street in Midtown Manhattan. The industrial scale of the space allowed Warhol to mass-produce larger works using the silk-screening process. It was called the Factory:

‘Factory is as good a name as any,’ said Andy. ‘A factory is where you build things. This is where I make or *build* my work. In my artwork hand painting would take much too long, and anyway that’s not the age we live in. Mechanical means are *today*, and using them I can get more art to more people. Art should be for everyone.’⁹³

In addition to using industrial production techniques, Warhol also employed assistants to help him complete his works. The spirit of the Factory was communal: large numbers of visitors and guests participated in whatever project was underway.

⁹⁰ David James. “The Unsecret Life: A Warhol Advertisement.” *October* 56 (Spring 1991): 21-41., p. 23.

⁹¹ Watson, p. 26, p. 152.

⁹² James, p. 22-23.

⁹³ Watson, p. 126, emphasis in original.

The Factory became the site of multiple and overlapping artistic activities from painting and silk-screening to filmmaking, photography, poetry, and music.⁹⁴ It was a gathering place, a social space, a home,⁹⁵ and critically, a creative arena. The participants in this atmosphere of collaboration and creativity are often remembered as “Superstars.” It is easy to imagine that Warhol merely shined a light on persons with already luminous characters who found their way to the Factory. In reality, Warhol had a stronger hand in fashioning them into influential tastemakers and stylish personas. Kathy Acker observed that the members of the Factory were undesirables, persons “who at the time no decent person, not even a hippy would recognize as being human.”⁹⁶ Warhol propelled this group of misfits, druggies, drag queens, thieves, and outcasts from no status to star status. Perhaps Warhol assembled his inner circle from these eccentrics because he did not see himself as glamorous. Even after his rise to fame, he still viewed himself as “Andy the Red Nosed Warhola.”⁹⁷

The Factory was the site for inclusion of “actors and poets, socialites and thieves, models, consumers of amphetamine, painters, filmmakers, and musicians”⁹⁸ and the exclusion of others.⁹⁹ As Warhol gathered more individuals into his orbit, the Factory

⁹⁴ The height of Warhol’s liminality was the “Exploding Plastic Inevitable,” which combined the music of the Velvet Underground with noise, dance, lighting displays, strobe lights, and multi-screen film projections. See Branden Joseph. “‘My Head Split Open’: Andy Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable.” *Grey Room* 8 (Summer 2002): 80-107. See also Callie Angell. *Andy Warhol’s Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol*. Catalogue Raisonné. New York: Abrams, in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 2006., p. 18-19.

⁹⁵ Both Gerard Malanga and Billy Linich lived in the Factory at various points. See Watson, p. 121-122.

⁹⁶ Kathy Acker quoted in Joseph, p. 97. Joseph continues, “It was a group, however, that would later emerge within punk and a politicized gay subculture.”

⁹⁷ Watson, p. 7. The nickname relates to Warhol’s trouble with his complexion, and in particular, with acne.

⁹⁸ Reva Wolf. “Collaboration as Social Exchange: *Screen Tests / A Diary* by Gerard Malanga and Andy Warhol.” *Art Journal* 52 (4) (Winter 1993): 59-66, p. 59.

⁹⁹ Most notably, this was the case with Valerie Solanas. She was close enough to strive for inclusion, but far enough to feel as though Warhol did not take her seriously. She later shot him.

became a sort of New York underground or subculture.¹⁰⁰ As Annette Michelson notes about the Factory, “the prohibitions and restrictions that govern the structure of everyday life are suspended, together with the decorum that underwrites traditional forms of social hierarchy. From this world are excised pity, piety, and etiquette that are linked to those forms. Here distances between persons are abrogated and eccentricity is exalted.”¹⁰¹ As you might imagine, this environment spurred competitive tensions and creativity in the same stroke. While this environment might make some uncomfortable, Warhol thrived.¹⁰² By some accounts, he openly courted competition between members of his coterie and delighted in their shows of renewed loyalty. Perhaps his privileged position as ringmaster contributed to Warhol’s unnatural comfort at the Factory.

Membership in this community of misfits with “anything goes” attitudes was often cemented by an invitation to participate in Warhol’s *Screen Tests*. The *Screen Tests* were designed as short film portraits of subjects captured during the span of a single reel of film.¹⁰³ Shot at a standard twenty-four frames per second, the films were replayed at the silent speed of sixteen frames per second in order to accentuate the effects of any movements in a surreal and clinical slow motion. For this reason, they were sometimes called “stillies”: Warhol was slowing down the concept of “motion” picture with the nearly unmoving appearance of the *Screen Tests*. The films were regularly shown at the

¹⁰⁰ In Chapter Five, I will explore the Factory subculture in greater detail.

¹⁰¹ Annette Michelson. “‘Where Is Your Rupture?’: Mass Culture and the Gesamtkunstwerk.” *October* 56 (Spring 1991): 42-63., p. 55.

¹⁰² Gerard Malanga, one of Warhol’s closest associates and collaborators manifests his own ambivalence towards this unstable environment in *Screen Tests / A Diary*. In this work, Malanga wrote poems to correspond to screen test stills. He begins, “The friends are forever involved in the ‘family photo.’” His reflections reveal a sense of family and inclusion, but also expose the tensions of the Factory and his own ambivalence about it (and about Warhol). “I am tempted not to return home / or to hate another nature. But I don’t. I do.” Malanga’s poems reveal his conflicted feelings towards the unstable and competitive environment of the Factory. See Wolf, p. 59.

¹⁰³ Angell, p. 8.

Factory, as a sort of background to other activities, and in a more organized fashion as part of the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, and as part of Jonas Mekas's Floating Cinematheque.¹⁰⁴ Hundreds of subjects sat for the portraits, (there are 472 *Screen Tests* in all) and individuals who really interested Warhol were invited to sit on multiple occasions.¹⁰⁵

Because the set up for these short films was extremely similar, the reactions of the sitters set the individual *Screen Tests* apart.¹⁰⁶ As Reva Wolf writes:

At the Factory, they were instructed to have a seat, usually in a cubicle like area set up expressly for the purpose of making screen tests. The camera rested on a tripod, one or two lights were temporarily installed, and at times a white or black backdrop was added. Warhol generally framed the composition of the head shot. Most often, sitters were instructed to gaze, without moving, directly at the camera lens, although examples also exist of profile and three-quarter views.¹⁰⁷

Warhol set himself basic conventions for capturing these portraits: "the camera should not move; the background should be as plain as possible; subjects must be well lit and centered in the frame; each poser should face forward, hold as still as possible, refrain from talking or smiling, and try not to blink."¹⁰⁸ These ground rules guaranteed that the real focus for each *Screen Test* would be the individual at hand. Variations, then, would be due only to the character of the individual and how he or she reacted to the scenario.

A combination of flattery and vanity lured individuals into sitting for their screen tests, but the results revealed so much more:

Vanity might lead one to sit for a portrait film, and the nomenclature 'screen test' might conjure up nothing more than the superficiality of appearances.

¹⁰⁴ Mekas was influential in the creation of underground and alternative cinema in New York in the 1960s. He was also the editor of *Film Culture*. See Watson, p. 66.

¹⁰⁵ Edie Sedgwick, Ivy Nicholson, Ann Buchanan, Gerard Malanga, and members of the Velvet Underground have several *Screen Tests*.

¹⁰⁶ Wolf, p. 62.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 61-62.

¹⁰⁸ Angell, p. 14.

Nonetheless, the intensity of gaze that often resulted from Warhol's instruction to sitters to stare directly into the camera lens had the capacity to communicate more meaningful associations [...] In a 1966 study, cultural critic John Gruen described the screen-test film as 'an intense study in involuntary character revelation.'¹⁰⁹

Intensity and vulnerability were often revealed through the unwavering lights and gaze of the camera. Some, like Salvador Dalí, boldly confronted the camera, manifesting the intensity of his persona. Others, like Ann Buchanan, took the instruction not to blink very seriously; she cried from the effort by the end of her session.

The interaction between Warhol and his sitter during a *Screen Test* is as important as that of a painter and subject during a more traditional portrait. Art critic Robert Pincus-Warren recalls the comments of Gerard Malanga and Warhol to Malanga's screen test: "I remember Gerry Malanga and Andy Warhol were there, and Andy would say things like, 'Isn't it wonderful! Isn't he terrific! He's doing it!' As if one is really doing something wonderful by simply remaining static and unmoving before the lens, but the *hype* was very, very exciting."¹¹⁰ Hype, flattery, vanity, and the idea of inclusion in Warhol's community played a large role in the seating so many interesting individuals for their screen tests. These factors coalesced into collaboration between sitter and film portraitist, in which neither party had full control. This situation was characteristic of most of Warhol's endeavors; he gained a type of control by ceding control to others. Warhol was a master facilitator of the creative process, helping to release the creativity of others.

But what was Warhol's ultimate role at the Factory? Due to the collaborative and social model of art making he adopted, it is difficult to discern. Watson contemplates the

¹⁰⁹ Wolf, p. 62.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 61, emphasis in original.

question: “Warhol’s role at the Factory was tantalizingly ambiguous. Were the Factory denizens a family, with Warhol as the permissive father? Was it a giant couch with Warhol as the silent analyst? Was it a court, with Warhol as its Machiavellian monarch? Or was it a movie studio with Warhol as its passive mogul?”¹¹¹ Perhaps, it is all of the above. Or perhaps, more directly, Warhol was the facilitator of creativity. His genius was social in nature; Warhol managed to focus the talents of others through his innovative approach to communal art making. Watson states:

The artifacts of the Factory collaborations demand models of authorship that do not fit conventional monographic discourse, interpreting the artist as a solitary genius [...] One of Warhol’s greatest ‘works’ was, in fact, psychological: the creation of a physical/social place where people ‘performed themselves.’ They determined how they would present themselves to the camera or to the tape recorder; Andy Warhol framed them and pushed the button. The Silver Factory was a ‘social sculpture,’ in which Warhol broadened the concept of authorship.¹¹²

Not only did Warhol broaden the concept of authorship, but he also redefined what it meant to be an artist. In addition to having a natural talent for making artworks that are both innovative and exemplary, Warhol turned his genius into a social activity. He thereby set the new rule to art in the process.

In conclusion, while Warhol encountered difficulties in breaking in to the fine art world at the beginning of his career, he is now considered one of the greatest American artists of the 20th Century. As a 1997 *Chicago Tribune* article put it, “anyone seeking an understanding of modern and contemporary art will have to come up against, and if possible, accept” Warhol and his influential work.¹¹³ Thus, the influence of his art has proven ingenious: his innovative and exemplary works have endured over time and have

¹¹¹ Watson, xiv.

¹¹² Ibid., xii.

¹¹³ Christopher Sieving. “Eve, Not Edie: The Queering of Andy Warhol.” *Postmodern Culture*. 8 (3) (May 1998), p. 1.

impacted the history of art. Warhol's work tells us a great deal about how ingenious expression can transform and expand the boundaries of meaning and communication. While it took some time for the significance of his art to be recognized, Warhol's explorations of the new boroughs of meaning ultimately expanded the boundaries of the city itself (communication itself). His centrality to the artworld suggests that his explorations of silk-screen paintings and cooperative production techniques in the new boroughs were incorporated into the city at large. In Chapter Five, I will explore Warhol's transformation from a cult figure into the leader of the Factory subculture. The types of communities Warhol gathered are crucial to understanding his aesthetic process and how his work was received.

Chapter Two

The Unfulfillable Demand to Respond to Genius

I. Introduction

In the last chapter, we investigated Wittgenstein's notion of "new boroughs" in order to better understand the social dimension of novel forms of expression. In this chapter, we will turn to aesthetic expression, and in particular Kantian works of genius, in order to explore how these expressions affect community and culture. The social dimension of taste is sometimes ignored in discussions of Kantian aesthetics, but by pairing it with the notion of shared community found in Wittgenstein, I will highlight the intersubjectivity already present in Kant's account of taste. As I show in this chapter, discussions of matters of taste in communication with others is crucial to Kant's conception of art, taste, and genius.

In this chapter, I lay out in three moments an argument about how humans strive to be adequate to the demands of art as characterized by Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*. In the first moment, I explain the demand to respond to art cognitively despite the ineffability of aesthetic ideas. Due to the meaningful excess of aesthetic ideas in comparison to normal concepts of cognition, an individual is silenced while she attempts to process the experience and searches for concepts with which to communicate about art. I establish the way in which art is a crucial consideration in the investigation of communication and culture.

In the second moment, I explore the way in which the demand of art on and for cognition is enmeshed with the demand to communicate with others through judgments of taste. This intersubjective aspect of response to art involves communication to and

with other people and so exposes the social dimension of the demands made by art. This social interaction is further complicated and fueled by the Kantian claim that humans are driven to gain assent from others about their judgments of taste despite the merely subjective basis of those judgments. The need for such agreement is a mark of refinement and humanity; according to Kant, it is not easy to achieve among different subjects.

In the third moment, I investigate how the social demand for agreement in judgment relates to culture. In particular, I explore the cultural effects of restrictions on aesthetic expression executed in the name of taste. Culture is that set of customs, practices, mores, and traditions particular to group of people that shares a way of life. Culture unites group members through the shared perspectives and habits they develop through living together. Often the commonalities are linguistic, moral, and aesthetic in nature, and for this reason, are of particular interest to my inquiry. Culture can also refer to those individuals who possess it; one can be a “cultured” or “civilized” person. This is slightly different from the sense articulated above, in that it signifies the development of higher motivations, purposes, and tastes that are not based upon mere need, desire, or natural inclination. This second sense of culture is also important to my inquiry because it highlights the normative notion of civilization in contrast with what is “natural,” “untrained,” or “unrefined.”¹¹⁴

With these definitions of culture in mind, in the third moment I also discuss Kant’s notions of the culture of discipline and the culture of skill in order to show the connection between culture and the role of taste in clipping the wings of genius. With

¹¹⁴ This sense of culture will be taken up in relation to Kant’s notion of genius. In this version of definition of culture, I deliberately avoided terms like “savage” because I do not want to indicate the negative connotations of such terminology.

this restrictive power of culture in mind, I explore how nature in the subject in general is “shaped” or “tamed” so that humans can pursue higher purposes such as art, science, and culture and how those endowed with genius have further limitations placed upon them. According to Kant, genius is in a double bind: genius is necessary to the advancement of culture, yet it is also made unfree by it. This moment of restriction upon genius exposes several dangers to freedom of expression for artists and audiences alike.

I single out these three moments for individual treatment because they relate to three different ways in which we might approach art: (a) a focus on the perceiving subject, (b) a focus on the interaction of individuals through conversations and judgments of taste, and (c) a focus on the sphere of discourse in which these interactions take place and are shaped, i.e., culture.

II. First Moment

Cognition and Aesthetic Ideas: The Objective and Subjective Moments of Aesthetic Response

Works of art set forth demands for engagement to individuals who encounter them. Specifically, this demand is for cognitive engagement that is sometimes transformed into verbal or written responses. Broadly speaking, the aim of cognitive engagement is to make sense of the works and to communicate about them. The initial conditions of cognitive engagement with works of art typically require, as a matter of convention, silence on the part of the audience. We see this norm upheld in museums, galleries, theaters, and auditoriums during exhibitions or performances. Silence is expected of attentive individuals in these settings; it is a conventional measure of membership in a community marked by civilization and culture. Examined from another

perspective, however, it isn't merely a matter of convention. Works of art themselves silence their audience as a *precondition* for engagement with them.

The kinds of ideas that constitute works of art are responsible for the intrinsic demand for silence. Instead of engaging in silence as a matter of mere decorum or simply in order to concentrate more fully upon a work, audience members are *silenced* by the complexity of the ideas with which they are presented. I will focus upon the cognitive dimension of the demands of art through a thorough examination of the impact of aesthetic ideas upon cognitive processes. This is an essential starting point for the investigation at hand because attempts at communication with other people about art are built upon the cognition that underlies it, and works of art present an excess of ideas and experience that subjects are unable to fully articulate.

Although individuals are able to feel this surplus, the meaning of these works exceeds our ability to fully process, conceptualize, or communicate about them – in short, to cognize them. Kant asserts that an aesthetic idea is a “presentation of the imagination which prompts much thought, to which no determinate concept is adequate, so that no language can express it completely and also allow us to grasp it.”¹¹⁵ We seek to give our aesthetic experience some sort of boundaries in order to comprehend it; we search for a unified concept (or set of concepts) by which to comprehend the meaning of the art we encounter. Yet, due to the multitude of partial and related presentations, it is difficult to do so. Kant states:

Now if a concept is provided with [*unterlegen*] a presentation of the imagination such that, even though this presentation belongs to the exhibition of the concept, yet it prompts, even by itself, so much thought as can never be comprehended within a determinate concept and thereby the presentation aesthetically expands

¹¹⁵ Immanuel Kant. *The Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987., §49, p.182, 314.

the concept itself in an unlimited way, then the imagination is creative in [all of] this and sets the power of intellectual ideas (i.e., reason) in motion: it makes reason think more, when prompted by a [certain] presentation, than what can be apprehended and made distinct in the presentation (though the thought does pertain to the concept of the object [presented]).¹¹⁶

Thus, the excess of aesthetic ideas stretches the bounds of our concepts and threatens the coherence of our experience. The result is a struggle to fit our experience into a concept that is too constrictive for it. While concepts fail to adequately capture the meaning of the work of art, still we struggle to find them. Otherwise, the excess would escape conceptualization and fall away from experience altogether. Because our ready-to-hand concepts are too narrow, too weak, or both, to engage adequately with works of art, the surplus produces further thought and activity in the attempt to process and comprehend it.

Kant argues that because aesthetic ideas challenge and stretch conceptual boundaries, they expand the mind itself. Aesthetic ideas activate and quicken the mental faculties through the excess that they contain.

[W]e present something that prompts the imagination to spread over a multitude of kindred presentations that arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words. These aesthetic attributes yield an *aesthetic idea*, which serves the mentioned rational idea as a substitute for a logical exhibition, but its proper function is to quicken [*beleben*] the mind by opening up for it a view into an immense realm of kindred presentations [...] that give the imagination a momentum which makes it think more in response to these objects, though in an undeveloped way, than can be comprehended within one concept and hence in one determinate linguistic expression.¹¹⁷

Aesthetic ideas quicken the mind to engage in what Kant calls reflective judgment, in which we search for the right concept to apprehend a sensuous particular. The imagination strives to attain its goal of fitting a concept to the presentations. This

¹¹⁶ Ibid., §49, p. 183, 314-315.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., §49, p. 183-184, 315, emphasis in original.

quickness the faculties and thus drives more cognition.¹¹⁸ Put another way, aesthetic ideas “make reason think more” by trying to join together a multiplicity of partial and kindred presentations. The mind springs into action, but it is not well directed. As Werner Pluhar explains in a passage about empirical judgment, “The imagination ‘apprehends’ (takes up) what is given in intuitions and then puts together or ‘combines’ this diversity (or ‘manifold’) so that it matches the concept. In this way the imagination ‘exhibits’ (*darstellen*, traditionally rendered as ‘to present’) the concept, i.e., provides it with a matching or ‘corresponding’ intuition.”¹¹⁹ The excess of aesthetic ideas exacerbates the disjunction between the imagination and the understanding. The understanding is unable to craft a concept that fits the experience and the imagination is unable to successfully join together the multiplicity of presentations.

The work of art, in short, both stimulates our cognitive faculties and also frustrates them; we are unable to fully cognize our experience and yet are driven to do so all the same. For Kant, this is both a source of pleasure and discomfort for the subject. This excess is pleasurable because it enlivens our faculties; we gain even more pleasure in our attempt to make something productive out of this excess. It results in the expansion of the mind beyond its current bounds and in the quickening of its faculties. This expansion and quickening of the mind are part of what we like about art and why we find it to be valuable. The displeasure, on the other hand, stems from the inability to fully align all the presentations into a single, well-formed concept or expression.

Under such circumstances, we silently strive to communicate, both to ourselves and to others, what is by nature difficult to express. Aesthetic ideas foil our ability to

¹¹⁸ Ibid., §49, p. 183, 315. Cf. Translator’s Introduction, §2, xxx-xxxix, especially xxxviii-xxxix; §9 on the harmony of the faculties, 218-219; and §35, 287.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., Pluhar Introduction, xxxv.

communicate with ease; as Kant puts it, they are “*unexpoundable* presentations of the imagination.”¹²⁰ Put differently, we can never fully unpack their meaning; they are unexpoundable due to the sheer amount of related presentations and the “thoughts of much that is ineffable”¹²¹ that we add to the concept in question. We cannot fully grasp (*fassen*) their meaning, but we endeavor to understand and express them nonetheless. Yet, these attempts at articulation and explanation are never complete. There is always more to be said about aesthetic ideas and experience.

Considering that works of art make us feel our selves in response to them, the expression of our judgments of taste is the most difficult and intimate form of communication that we can undertake, and one of the most valuable.¹²² According to Kant, it is the communication of one’s *self* or the experience of *feeling* one’s self through the encounter with art.¹²³ There is no end to the struggle to express our selves to others about art. As a further complication, individual selves are continually developing and changing as they accumulate experience of the world (and the art in it). As Thierry de Duve claims, selves are constituted, in part, through judgments of taste:

In love affairs, with works of art as with people, your feelings are of course determined by past experience, channeled through the story of your family, conditioned by your belonging to this or that social class, by your sex and your gender, by your education, by your heredity. Obviously, you can only love within the limits of your social determination and of the cultural opportunities that are objectively available to you, but that doesn’t stop you from loving. [...] You have introjected the socially acquired dispositions that produce the love of art; you have let them lie fallow, or you have cultivated them to a greater or lesser extent; regardless, they shape you just as intimately as anything else in your personality.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Ibid., Comment I, p. 215, 342, emphasis in original.

¹²¹ Ibid., §49, p. 185, 316.

¹²² Ibid., §1, p. 44, 204.

¹²³ Ibid., §60, p. 231, 355.

¹²⁴ Thierry de Duve. *Kant After Duchamp*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996., p. 31-32.

De Duve rightly emphasizes the dialectical relationship of selves and tastes. As individual selves develop, so do their tastes. Conversely, these tastes shape the selves that have them.

Along with Kant, de Duve asserts that what individuals feel in response to art is uncontrollable, compulsive even, if it has its roots in the history of the self in question. De Duve states, “Like your choices in love affairs, your choices in art are free and at the same time compulsive. Something irresistible attracts you. You don’t always know what, but you know that you are attracted because you feel it.”¹²⁵ Taking these passages together, we note that taste is *both* socially determined *and* yet somehow “innate” to the subject. This reinforces the point about judgments of taste and the communication of selves: if tastes are shaped (or freely determined) by the self, then their expression gets at something extremely intimate about the person articulating them. The expression of one’s judgments of taste to others is the deepest form of self-expression. For this reason, it is also the most difficult to communicate. Finishing out de Duve’s dialectic, judgments of taste shape the selves who try to communicate (themselves) to others. The judgments they express, in turn, may be used to persuade or move other individuals to experience art in the same manner, and effectively, to have the same taste.

The foregoing analysis applies to various forms of response to art. For instance, we might be inspired to produce works of art in response to another work of art. It is much more common, however, to discuss works of art than to respond by writing a song or painting a picture, for instance. My focus upon the ability to linguistically respond to works of art is due, in part, to the public prevalence of discussions of art and taste. One

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 31. I will more fully develop this line of argument in the second moment.

need not be an artist herself in order to respond to art; everyone can participate in such conversations. Although the ineffability of aesthetic ideas compromises our ability to communicate effectively about art, linguistic utterances are still the most common form of intimate self-expression. We are sometimes silenced by our encounters with art, but strive nonetheless to communicate our aesthetic experiences to others.

Summary

A work of art makes the subject feel her self and reflect upon her encounter with it. She wants to talk about it, but is unable to find words and concepts that are adequate to her experience. The work has spurred such an excess in cognition that it cannot be easily grasped or communicated to others; cognitively full silence can result from aesthetic experience in these circumstances. Despite the difficulties involved, humans strive to express themselves with respect to aesthetic experience even if (and especially if) the demand to respond is greater than our powers of communication (and conceptualization). One cannot fully explicate the content of aesthetic ideas, but one continues to try. The inability to fully comprehend and communicate about art makes the demand to respond all the more persistent.

To this point, I have set up the relation of individual selves to works of art and the effect that art has upon cognition and communication. At this juncture, we must begin to examine where these attempts at communication and agreement with other people lead. If aesthetic ideas are ineffable and elude conceptualization, why strive to communicate them? Why don't we remain silent in the presence of that which has silenced us? Why struggle to express that which is difficult to communicate? Having established the objective and subjective aspects of aesthetic response, let us turn to the intersubjective

aspect of response. In the next section of argument, I examine the inability to fully communicate about art to others and what happens when these expressions are incomplete. The ongoing attempt to communicate judgments to others has wide reaching implications for what Kant calls “the advancement” of communication, art, and culture.

III. Second Moment

Communication and Community: The Intersubjective Moment of Aesthetic Response

Humans not only attempt to make sense of their aesthetic experience and to express themselves regarding it, but also to discuss art with others and to gain assent with respect to judgments of taste. We are not satisfied to merely express our judgments; we must attempt to convince others of their correctness, to get them to see as we do, and to make our *selves* understood.¹²⁶ This opens up the intersubjective demand of art to communicate about our selves and our responses to art. In this section of the argument, I will begin to address judgments of taste, the sociability that befits our humanity, and the civilization of the subject from an intersubjective perspective.

Allow me to re-raise some of the questions that remained at the end of the first moment: Why attempt to communicate in spite of the difficulties it presents for subjects? Why try to express ourselves if it is impossible to fully communicate about aesthetic ideas? Why not pass over in silence that which we cannot speak about? To begin to sketch an answer, we must consider the fact that communication is a sign of a culture that is both civilized and advanced.¹²⁷ Moreover, communication about art indicates that

¹²⁶ Kant, §41.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, General Comment on the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgments, p. 136.

humanity aspires to its vocation of being rational agents that are capable of more than mere desire and inclination. Humans can design and communicate about purposes, such as art, that are not purely based on need.¹²⁸ However, humans need training to be able to effectively communicate and live in society with one another. Kant states:

Only in *society* is the beautiful of empirical interest. And if we grant that the urge to society is natural to man but that his fitness and propensity of it, i.e., *sociability*, is a requirement of man as a creature with a vocation for society and hence is a property pertaining to his *humanity*, then we must also inevitably regard taste as an ability to judge whatever allows us to communicate even our *feeling* to everyone else, and hence regard taste as a means of furthering something that everyone's natural inclination demands.¹²⁹

In this passage, Kant links the demands of art (the demands of taste) to the demands of sociability (the demands of communication). While humans have the natural urge to live in society, they are not immediately prepared to live alongside one another in a peaceful manner. Rather, humans need training in sociability – in communication with one another – in order to form a harmonious society. The most refined communication is of judgments of taste in regard to our feelings about art, that which, more generally, exhibits purposiveness without a purpose.¹³⁰

Communication itself is a source of pleasure for humans because it serves to strengthen our social ties and thereby to advance our culture.¹³¹ We aim to express our pleasure about the beautiful and to demand the same response from others:

¹²⁸ Ibid., §11.

¹²⁹ Ibid., §41, p. 163, 296-297, emphasis in original.

¹³⁰ Ibid., §11, p. 66, 221. Kant states, “Therefore the liking that, without a concept, we judge to be universally communicable and hence to be the basis that determines a judgment of taste, can be nothing but the subjective purposiveness in the presentation of an object, without any purpose (whether objective or subjective), and hence the mere form of purposiveness, insofar as we are conscious of it, in the presentation by which an object is *given* us.”

¹³¹ Ibid., §41, p. 163. This will become clear to a limited extent in the second moment, and in greater detail in the third moment.

That the ability to communicate one's mental state, even if this is only the state of one's cognitive powers, carries a pleasure with it, could easily be established (empirically and psychologically) from man's natural propensity for sociability. But that would not suffice for our aim here. When we make a judgment of taste, the pleasure we feel is something we require from everyone else as necessary, just as if, when we call something beautiful, we had to regard beauty as a characteristic of the object, determined in it according to concepts, even though in fact, apart from the reference to the subject's feeling, beauty is nothing by itself.¹³²

In talking about art, we are really talking about *ourselves* and about what *we* experience in the encounter with beauty. We express the pleasure that accompanies the attunement and quickening of the faculties in response to art. In other words, we express our subjectivity. Due to the intimacy of such self-expression, it is curious that this communication also serves society's purposes. Kant states: "Fine art [...] is a way of presenting that is purposive on its own and that furthers, even though without a purpose, the culture of our mental powers to [facilitate] social communication."¹³³ We gain a double pleasure here from the attunement of the faculties and from the attempts at communicating it to others. As such, communication about art is beneficial both cognitively and socially; it is the refinement and civilization of beings that are socially engaged with the world and with each another:

It seems that for all fine art, insofar as we aim at its highest degree of perfection, the propaedeutic does not consist in [following] precepts but in cultivating our mental powers by exposing ourselves beforehand to what we call *humaniora* [the humanities]; they are called that presumably because *humanity* [*Humanität*] means both the universal *feeling of sympathy*, and the ability to engage universally in very intimate *communication*. When these two qualities are combined, they constitute the sociability that befits [our] humanity [*Menschheit*] and distinguishes it from the limitation [characteristic] of animals.¹³⁴

¹³² Ibid., §9, p. 62-63, 217-219.

¹³³ Ibid., §44, p. 173, 306.

¹³⁴ Ibid., §60, p. 231, 355, emphasis in original.

What is at stake in the communication of judgments of taste isn't just the character, content, or meaning of the art; rather, it is the individual's experience of art and her ability to communicate it to others. Such communication brings our subjectivity into the social sphere. This tests how our *individuality* fits or conflicts with that of other agents. Judgments of taste are about our fellow feeling with others.

Despite the fact that judgments of taste do not strictly refer to an object, we nonetheless demand universal agreement about them:

But if a judgment has *subjective* – i.e. aesthetic – universal validity, which does not rest on a concept, we cannot infer that it also has logical universal validity, because such judgments do not deal with the object [itself] at all. This is precisely why aesthetic universality we attribute to a judgment of a special kind; for although it does not connect the predicate of beauty with the concept of the *object*, considered in its entire logical sphere, yet it extends that predicate over the entire sphere of *judging persons*.¹³⁵

This is what Kant refers to as the “subjective universality” of judgments of taste.¹³⁶ We demand that others assent to our judgments of taste due to the common basis we have for making them, our *sensus communis*.¹³⁷ Yet, we do not take this commonality for granted in practice; humans feel the need to solicit responses from others about their experience and in turn, demand agreement with their own assessments. This is because humans live together in societies where persons are expected to communicate with one another. As Kant puts it, such sociability and communication are *required* of humans.¹³⁸

Building off of these points, Jerome Kohn asserts that the *sensus communis* is the basis for a “common world” of communication and the exchange of judgments. He states, “By *sensus communis* [Kant] meant a sense that all human beings, human beings as such,

¹³⁵ Ibid., §8, p. 58-59, 215, emphasis in original.

¹³⁶ Ibid., §6, §8.

¹³⁷ Ibid., §19-22.

¹³⁸ Ibid., §41, p.163, 296-297. Cf., §2, 205, note 10.

have in common; it is the source of human *communication* – that is, speech, the *communicability* of subjective feelings, and the ground of human *community*.”¹³⁹ Here, in a Kantian fashion, Kohn connects communication and community building. He goes on to say that this common sense is the “ground from which aesthetic judgments arise.”¹⁴⁰ It is that “through [which] the faculty of imagination, represents and discriminates as fit or unfit to appear in a common world, a world that a community of judges would be pleased to share with one another.”¹⁴¹

Building a community through “settling matters of taste” is an ongoing process. As Kohn articulates the point, “aesthetic reflective judgments are open-endedly *intersubjective*,”¹⁴² meaning that discussions of taste are always incomplete. Put more strongly, they are “in principle unending”¹⁴³ due to the potentially infinite number of interlocutors with whom one may converse. What’s more, it is difficult to convince others to adopt one’s taste despite the pressing need to gain agreement about it. Kant states:

If we judge objects merely in terms of concepts, then we lose all presentation of beauty. This is why there can be no rule by which someone could be compelled to acknowledge that something is beautiful. No one can use reasons or principles to talk us into a judgment on whether some garment, house, or flower is beautiful. We want to submit the object to our own eyes, just as if our liking of it depended on that sensation. And yet, if we then call the object beautiful, we believe we have a universal voice, and lay claim to the agreement of everyone, whereas any private sensation would decide solely for the observer himself and his liking.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Jerome Kohn, “Kant’s Common World.” *Raritan* 22 (3) (Winter 2003), pp. 102-112, p.102-103, emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103, emphasis in original.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 103, emphasis in original.

¹⁴³ Joseph Cannon. “The Intentionality of Judgments of Taste in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (1) (Feb. 2008), pp. 53-65, p. 59.

¹⁴⁴ Kant, §8, p. 59-60, 215-216.

We demand the agreement of others even if we acknowledge that they will want their own “proof” through their own experience of the work, just as we ourselves would. The communication of judgments of taste and demands of agreement to them, even if not finally persuasive, can nonetheless facilitate the formation of people who are deeply expressive.

De Duve reinforces Kant’s idea that all seek to judge art for themselves by stating, “Artistic culture transmits art just as jurisprudence passes along judgment: by re-judging.”¹⁴⁵ The implication here is that individuals are not satisfied to merely accept the judgments of others, but that they must judge and even re-judge art for themselves based upon their own experiences.¹⁴⁶ De Duve relates this point to how personal experience serves as a forceful justification of judgment. He states: “Something irresistible attracts you. You don’t always know what, but you know that you are attracted because you *feel* it. All you have for knowledge is your own certitude and all you have for certitude is your own feeling. To you it is *indisputable*; it is its own proof.”¹⁴⁷ Since attractions to art are indisputable for the individuals who feel them, argumentation cannot gain much traction on judgments of taste. Everyone feels certain about their own experience, so we each demand that others agree with our own judgments of taste.

The cultivation of taste is further complicated by the fact that there is no law by which we can demonstrate the correctness of our judgments of taste; instead, taste is a

¹⁴⁵ De Duve, p. 38.

¹⁴⁶ Of course, de Duve is suggesting quite a bit more in this passage. He addresses the larger point of how culture and taste change and develop through time. This means that some art that was initially neglected or rejected can later be accepted through subsequent judgments that take into account the trajectory of taste over time. I will not take up this point in detail here.

¹⁴⁷ De Duve, p. 31, emphasis mine. Cf. Cannon, p. 54 and p. 57.

“mere ideal standard”¹⁴⁸ that we strive to achieve. Kant goes on to clarify that a universal voice “does not *postulate* everyone’s agreement (since only a logically universal judgment can do that, because it can adduce reasons); it merely *requires* this agreement from everyone, as an instance of the rule, an instance regarding which it expects confirmation not from concepts but from the agreement of others.”¹⁴⁹ It is important not to lose sight of the fact that judgments of taste are aesthetic, that is, they are based upon feeling rather than upon concepts. Kant states:

Whenever we make a judgment declaring something to be beautiful, we permit no one to hold a different opinion, even though we base our judgment only on our feeling rather than on concepts; hence we regard this underlying feeling as a common rather than a private feeling. But if we are to use this common sense in such a way, we cannot base it on experience; for it seeks to justify us in making judgments that contain an ought: it does not say that everyone *will* agree with my judgment, but that he *ought* to.¹⁵⁰

Aesthetic judgments are universally valid subjectively, not universally valid objectively, because such judgments are not governed by a determinate concept.¹⁵¹ Even in cases where a determinate concept does govern, subjects often disagree with respect to *particular* judgments. This, however, is a disagreement about how to apply reflective judgment *correctly*, not about whether it is “universally valid for everyone.”¹⁵² Increased communication of and about judgments of taste is not enough to guarantee agreement. Nonetheless, agents continue to require it of others.¹⁵³ As subjects capable of reasoning and communication, we strive to express ourselves ever more perfectly in harmony with other people even without having a law to follow. More than agreement in taste, then,

¹⁴⁸ Kant, §8, p. 58, 215.

¹⁴⁹ Kant, §8, p. 60, 216, emphasis in original.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., §22, p. 89, 239, emphasis in original. Cf., §6, 211-212; §7, 212-213; §8, 214-216; §38, 290; §40, 293-296.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., §8, p. 58, 215.

¹⁵² Ibid., §8, p. 58, 214-215.

¹⁵³ Ibid., §7.

individuals desire understanding and agreement in communication. To return to Kohn's formulation, we desire to live in a "common world."

Joseph Cannon elaborates upon the demands expressed in the exchange of judgments of taste. From a Kantian position, he asserts that these demands generate new ways of communicating with one another and that this communication is ongoing and even incompleteable: "[B]eauty creates unique milieus for interaction and communication between finite and rational beings. All claims that something is beautiful are necessarily provisional; thus the conversation about them is in principle unending."¹⁵⁴ Cannon arrives at this conclusion by considering the unexpoundability of aesthetic ideas in connection with the indeterminacy of the concepts upon which they are built. He goes on to suggest that these factors contribute to the "provisionality" of judgments of taste:

Kant expresses this explicitly: the demand that others agree with a judgment of taste is always and necessarily provisional. [...] The interpretation I offer provides this provisionality with a definite shape: the claim implied in any assertion that an object is beautiful is 'there is something about this object (performance, and so forth) that will outstrip any attempt to determine it.' But such a claim can never be made with any certainty – one can have true belief, but no *account*.¹⁵⁵

This provisionality spurs further attempts at communication with others, but there is no guarantee (or possibility) that we will reach the agreement we seek.¹⁵⁶ The belief that this painting is beautiful, even if justified, does not aid in our ability to articulate our feelings about it. As a result, the demand issued by art to respond to it asserts itself all the more persistently; individuals respond by striving to communicate their tastes in spite of the difficulties involved.

¹⁵⁴ Cannon, p. 59. I will expand upon this point in a few pages.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 59, emphasis in original. Cf. Kant §5, 214-215.

¹⁵⁶ While Cannon claims that conversations about taste are in principle unending, he goes on to suggest that judgments of taste are "closed to the discursive point of view." I will return to this point in a few paragraphs in order to illustrate how his position differs from my own.

The drive to communicate with others about art, as well as to demand agreement in judgment, is a sign of sophistication and culture in an individual. To reiterate, this sociability requires the training of subjects.¹⁵⁷ Kant states: “For we judge someone refined if he has the inclination and the skill to communicate his pleasure to others, and if he is not satisfied with an object unless he can feel his liking for it in community with others. Moreover, a concern for universal communication is something that everyone expects and demands from everyone else, on the basis, as it were, of an original contract dictated by [our] very humanity.”¹⁵⁸ Taste involves the continual demand to exchange our aesthetic judgments with others. Because it is intertwined with a concern for communication, the establishment of taste is a social matter.

Taste requires individuals to seek out society and value and concord with others. In order to discuss matters of taste, one must be able to communicate well with others, as well as respect the manner in which others give accounts of their judgments. One must be able to both give reasons and listen to those offered by others in order for taste to function properly, even if the desired and required agreement cannot be reached. Art issues a demand to those who encounter it to cognize and respond to the work, and to respond to others who respond to the work. Put another way, a demand internal to art itself (to respond to art) is intertwined with a demand internal to communication (to express oneself to others and to attempt to understand their responsive utterances). Thus, the demand to respond to art produces intersubjectivity.

Much in this argument hinges upon Kant’s idea that the persistent demand for universal communicability is a demand to communicate with all potential interlocutors.

¹⁵⁷ Kant, §41, p. 163, 297.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., §41 p. 164, 297.

Aesthetic communication is open-ended because there will always be more conversation partners with whom to discuss our experiences and to convince about the validity of our judgments of taste. This is what Kant means by “universal communicability.” This idea does not imply exhaustive communication that ably expresses all the cognition that underlies aesthetic experience, but rather the inconclusiveness of all aesthetic communication.

We are already faced with a problem here. As Kant sketches it, the demand for universal communicability with respect to judgments of taste arises, but without the guarantee that this communication will (or can) be complete.¹⁵⁹ It is a demand that we can never fully fulfill. Instead, he asserts that such communication will be ongoing, both because there will always be more interlocutors, but also because each individual will continue to try to perfect her expressions and to give fuller accounts of her aesthetic experience. This gets at a social aspect of the issue – the aforementioned drive to develop culture, sociability, and humanity through communication. The unending character of communication in these circumstances isn’t necessarily negative. Instead, it suggests that the attempt to communicate with others is a continual project that has wide reaching implications for expression and culture.¹⁶⁰

Cannon also addresses the issue of cognitive and communicative incompleteness. While this issue is not the focal point of his article, it is crucial to his analysis of the

¹⁵⁹ I touched upon this point in connection with both de Duve and Cannon and aim to more fully articulate it here.

¹⁶⁰ Even if such communication is incomplete or inadequate to the experience, it nevertheless answers the demand set by art – to cognize and attempt to communicate our experience to others. The attempt here is crucial: we strive to communicate with others about aesthetic experience even though our thoughts and mental attunement can never be completely divulged. The demand to respond to fine art isn’t about the completeness of the communication. Rather, it is about the attempt to express one’s experience of art.

intentional structure of judgments of taste. Positioning himself in the debate between Kant scholars Henry Allison and Paul Guyer, Cannon states:

I take judgments of taste to *start* (but not end) with a cognitive interest in the object: our cognitive capacities are enlivened because they are engaged. We approach the object by trying to determine what it is or means. The enlivenment of our faculties is a result of the way certain objects invite judgment but exceed our every attempt to determine them, which makes them compelling and ‘always new’ to us.¹⁶¹

In this passage, he addresses the excessiveness of mental activity and our inability to fully process and express it. By saying that we start, but not end, with the object, Cannon gets at what I discussed in the first moment of response to art: how the work of art is an occasion for reflection upon and response to both the work and oneself. As Cannon points out here (and as I do above), this cognition is ongoing and enlivening because we are never “done” grappling with art. This is because we can never fully conceptualize a work of art in a determinate fashion. Therefore, we can never fully expound upon that work linguistically.

Cannon’s position and mine diverge in terms of how we view the excess of aesthetic ideas and the impact it has upon expression and culture. As a result, we differ on how to interpret the *importance* of this excess. Cannon does not follow out how the excess of cognition and judgments has an impact beyond the object and the individual interlocutors trading their judgments of taste.¹⁶² Cannon thereby fails to recognize the

¹⁶¹ Cannon, p. 57, emphasis in original. Cannon positions his discussion of intentionality and taste amidst the ongoing debate between Henry Allison and Paul Guyer about how to understand the character of judgments of taste in Kant. See also Paul Guyer, *The Claims of Taste*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979., and Henry Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

¹⁶² As aforementioned, Cannon’s article focuses on intentionality and judgments of taste rather than their implications. I do not mean to criticize him solely because we have different interests in *The Critique of Judgment*. On the contrary, the basis of my criticism lies in some of his key phrasings that do more than bracket the question of the implications of judgments of taste; these phrases neutralize the importance and impact of such judgments. I will elaborate upon this point presently.

intersubjective and cultural implications of judgments of taste (moments two and three in my analysis). Put more plainly, Cannon focuses on what cannot be unpacked from a judgment of taste in a way that understates the significance of the overabundance of cognition that is spurred by aesthetic ideas. By terming judgments of taste “discursively mute” and “closed to the discursive point of view,” Cannon misses the contributions to communication, sociability, and culture that stem from them.¹⁶³ Instead, Cannon refers to what we cannot communicate about in judgments as “mute” and “closed” to discursivity, thereby devaluing any attempts to communicate them and neglecting the possibility that they could have a meaningful impact on future expression. This devaluation is implied in the connotations of “mute” and “closed” as what does not speak and does not mean.¹⁶⁴ As a result, Cannon disregards the possibility that the struggle to communicate aesthetic ideas can open opportunities for future meanings and expressions.

Furthermore, Cannon asserts that judgments of taste are mute to *theory*, thereby elaborating upon the scope of his claim about what cannot be made discursive.¹⁶⁵ He states:

We as theorists cannot provide an account of how in a particular instance a judgment of taste will proceed. Although, according to Kant, we can discuss judgments of taste in general terms of what of our capacities are involved and how they relate to one another in the moment of judging, in their particulars judgments of taste are closed to the discursive point of view. Thus they are, to us as theorists, mute.¹⁶⁶

Cannon states that we can exchange judgments with one another in conversation while in the encounter with an aesthetic object, but claims that such judgments are *only* expressive

¹⁶³ Cannon, p. 61.

¹⁶⁴ See Judith Butler’s *Excitable Speech* for an interesting discussion of issues of marginalization and censorship through exclusion. See also Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* for notions of exclusionary definition related to feminist thought.

¹⁶⁵ Cannon, p. 61. He states, “Thus they [judgments of taste] are, to us as theorists, mute.”

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

in that context.¹⁶⁷ As theorists, he suggests, we cannot talk about the “particulars” of judgments of taste with any authority. Cannon goes on to say that “in a moment where one is confronted with an aesthetic idea and the duty or desire to express it to others, things may be different. Judgments of taste are mute *outside* of that context, and we as theorists are (or should be) mute *within* that context.”¹⁶⁸ Cannon is right if all he means is that we cannot express aesthetic ideas linguistically in a way that will capture their full meaning.¹⁶⁹ But it seems that he is reaching for something more in the phrases “discursively mute” and “closed to the discursive point of view.” While I would not go so far as to claim that theorists can know in advance how particular judgments will proceed, I do claim that such judgments have an important impact upon future expression, communication, and taste.

I want to explore this possibility by redescribing the inability to fully communicate as a potentially creative experience with implications beyond the particular judgments exchanged by individual interlocutors. For example, what is not or cannot be said might be redescribed as “silence that is full of meaning.” Such a redescription points towards the positive effects of the inability to fully communicate.¹⁷⁰ Insofar as our attempts to express aesthetic ideas are buzzing and bursting at the seams with meaningful content, where does that excess go, and what form does it take? In his too-narrow focus

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 61, emphasis in original. This is a very confusing passage. The demands of art I have been referring to throughout this chapter imply the duty and desire to communicate about aesthetic ideas. It is unclear what Cannon means by claiming that “things may be different” when we are responding to such duties and desires – a phrase that trembles with uncertainty. Since the rest of Cannon’s analysis circles around our inability to expound upon aesthetic ideas, it seems quite important to specify how things may be different in this scenario. Unfortunately, Cannon is mute on this point. In the paragraphs that follow, I aim to show what difference our responses to aesthetic ideas (and the demands of art that underlie them) make to expression and culture.

¹⁶⁹ This is the same Kantian thought I have articulated above in moments one and two.

¹⁷⁰ I will return to this point shortly.

on the cognitive processes of judgments of taste and our inability to get at their “particulars” to explain how we came by them,¹⁷¹ Cannon neglects how the silences involved in these exchanges also speak.

Summary

Why try to communicate that which eludes expression, namely, aesthetic ideas in judgments of taste? Kant’s answer is that we are social beings who are not satisfied until we can communicate the cognitive experience of art and the feelings of pleasure that attend it to others. According to Kant, this is the sociability that befits our humanity.¹⁷² Such sociability is for him a sign of civilization in the subject. The highest mark of refinement is the need for others to assent to one’s judgments of taste. Aesthetic communication expresses the play of our faculties as well as the feelings that accompany such play. In this light, the call for assent with respect to judgments of taste is the demand for agreement in subjectivity, or for subjective universality, as Kant puts it. It is a call to turn communication with others into *community*. The demand that we respond to works of art requires us to respond to, communicate with, and be understood by *other people*. Seen in this light, it is a demand of intersubjectivity and sociability.

¹⁷¹ Cannon is interested in how to explain what it is about a specific work of art that really excites us in order predict how another judgment might unfold in the future. He is interested in the reception of the work, but only insofar as it is connected to the intentional structure of judgments of taste. I am interested in reception as it extends beyond the individual to the intersubjective and cultural levels of response.

¹⁷² Kant, §60, p. 231.

IV. Third Moment

The Cultural Moment of Aesthetic Response

Standards of taste depend upon the culture that has shaped them. As such, we have to examine judgment in relation to the cultural demands of aesthetic response. We must investigate the production and reception of works of art in order to understand how our responses are shaped by culture. The third moment examines cultural restrictions upon expression and how such limitations make aesthetic expression unfree. These restrictions run in both directions – towards artist and audience alike. As Kant claims, this is due, in part, to the fact that evaluations of art are based upon their contributions to culture, or as he puts it, to the importance of and the need for open and ongoing communication to cultural advancement.

A. Ingenious Complications

Considering the fact that the intersubjective moment of response involves engagement with others about the work of art, it is important to consider the mores and regulations of the culture in which individuals are communicating about art. To that end, we must examine how culture shapes the expressions of artists, and in particular, the expressions of artists endowed with genius. As we have seen, art serves as the occasion for cognition and response. Art issues demands on the subject to feel something, to experience something, and ultimately, to *do something*. I put extra emphasis on action here because art changes the way individuals view the world and thereby changes how they inhabit it. As such, culture often aims to regulate what kinds of actions and responses are deemed acceptable. In some cases these regulations serve as restrictions rather than as mere guidelines. Take, for instance, works of genius that give meaning

new form. They are proposals for the inclusion of new meanings in the realm of communication. Because they serve as models for future expression, restrictions upon works of genius are all the more dangerous. If the new works do not conform to cultural or political powers, the expansion of expression is particularly endangered.

Works of genius pose several challenges. They change the way we see and experience the world through their innovation and exemplarity. Hence, they are often difficult to understand in their own time. This is a great loss, especially if ingenious works are not recovered and reconsidered later. The new perspectives offered by these works challenge traditional ways of doing, making, and expressing. More specifically, works of genius threaten to subvert the status quo and the mores of culture. As Kant puts the point, genius sets the (new) rule to art.¹⁷³ It thereby changes (old) rules in the process. As a result, culture often suppresses these threats to its authority and power. And this is so, whether those threats really challenge cultural norms or are merely imagined to do so.¹⁷⁴ To be clear, the challenge posed by works of genius typically comes from *within* culture rather than from outside of it. It stems from the conflict of nature and that which aims to civilize it, culture.¹⁷⁵

What are the costs of such restrictions? Not only do restrictions have an effect on what genius is permitted to produce, so that its contributions are (made) “fit for an ever advancing culture,”¹⁷⁶ but they also have an impact upon what the public at large deems appropriate expression. This, in turn, influences the sorts of expressions that speakers

¹⁷³ Kant, §46, 307-308.

¹⁷⁴ In Kantian terms, taste (as the agent of culture) clips the wings of genius in order to make its contributions fit for an ever advancing culture.

¹⁷⁵ I will add one caveat to this point. The challenge comes from within culture, but from the force of *nature* within culture. Kant sometimes frames this as a tension between nature and culture and sometimes as between genius and taste.

¹⁷⁶ Kant, §50.

and artists put forth in the future. While wing clipping may not *begin* with the intention of harnessing genius for a particular cultural end, like protecting and advancing its own traditions and interests, those in positions of political or cultural authority can abuse the power of wing clipping to secure their own positions. It is important to understand that the political and cultural restriction of works sometimes appears under the guise of the “advancement” or “safeguarding” of culture.¹⁷⁷ Such dissimulation imperils the expansion of art and language into new territories of meaning and sense. Clipping the wings of genius can suppress important innovations in expression that are not easily understood at their introduction and which give “voice” to that which hasn’t yet found expression. The contribution of this section is that it intertwines discourses about language and aesthetic expression with notions of marginalization, censorship, and genius.

B. The Paradox of Genius: Cultural Champion and Cultural Enemy

Kant defines genius as “the talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art. Since talent is an innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature, we could also put it this way: *Genius* is the innate mental predisposition (*ingenium*) *through which* nature gives the rule to art.”¹⁷⁸ Kant uses the term “genius” in a slightly different sense than we might today. Genius is the force or power of nature working through the subject.¹⁷⁹ An *individual* is not a genius; she *exhibits* genius. Put differently,

¹⁷⁷ One can interpret Kant’s account of wing clipping to mean that taste safeguards the authority of tradition through this activity. This is just one way to interpret this passage. Kant himself seems ambivalent about the role of taste. Sometimes Kant moves more towards taste’s restrictive role (in relation to genius), at other times, he moves more towards taste in its “disinterested interest” role. I will discuss the dialectic of taste in greater detail momentarily.

¹⁷⁸ Kant, §46, p. 174, 307, emphasis in original.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, §46. Later in this section, Kant uses the term “*Gewalt*,” meaning force or power. I have infused my definition of genius with this sense. The term also comes up in Kant’s definition of the dynamically sublime. Cf., §28.

genius is *nature in the subject*. This force is what makes works of art *Geistreich*, or “full of spirit.”¹⁸⁰

According to Kant, however, works of genius must be more than just innovative. They must also be exemplary. The art cannot simply be novel; it must also have some quality that sets it apart and by which it becomes an exemplar for future works to follow. Such art sets a (new) rule to art and thereby offers a new model in the sphere of aesthetic expression. Kant expands upon this point:

(1) Genius is a *talent* for producing something for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition consisting of a skill for something that can be learned by following some rule or other; hence the foremost property of genius must be *originality*. (2) Since nonsense too can be original, the products of genius must also be models; i.e., they must be *exemplary*; hence, though they do not themselves arise through imitation, still they must serve others for this, i.e., as a standard or rule by which to judge. (3) Genius itself cannot describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its products, and it is rather as *nature* that it gives the rule. That is why, if an author owes a product to his genius, he himself does not know how he came by the ideas for it; nor is it in his power [*Gewalt*] to devise such products at his pleasure, or by following a plan, and to communicate [his procedure] to others in precepts that would enable them to bring about like products. (Indeed, that is presumably why the word genius is derived from [Latin] *genius*, [which means] the guardian and guiding spirit that each person is given at his own birth, and to whose inspiration [*Eingebung*] those original ideas are due. (4) Nature, through genius, prescribes the rule not to science but to art, and this only insofar as the art is to be fine art.¹⁸¹

More simply put, genius is the talent, endowed by nature, through which subjects give the rule to art through original and exemplary art-making. As Kant states, “fine art is possible only as the product of genius.”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., §47, p. 176, 308. Kant states, “one cannot learn to write inspired poetry.” In footnote 41, Pluhar explains that “inspired” is a translation of “*Geistreich*, literally ‘rich in spirit.’” Cf., §46, 306-307, particularly when Kant talks about the derivation of genius from Latin “*genius*,” meaning guiding spirit or guardian. This connects Kant’s use of inspired and inspirited to describe genius / works of genius.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., §46, p. 175-176, 307-308, emphasis in original.

¹⁸² Ibid., §46, p. 175, 307.

Although genius is required in order for fine art to progress, this advancement does not hinge upon the artist's ability to communicate in any other medium about her ingenious works and what they mean. In fact, genius exacerbates the difficulties of communicating about fine art. Kant states, "if an author owes a product to his genius, he himself does not know how he came by the ideas for it; nor is it in his power [*Gewalt*] to devise such products at his pleasure, or by following a plan, and to communicate [his procedure] to others in precepts that would enable them to bring about like products."¹⁸³ Because the very rules of art are changed or made anew during the production process, the contribution of the ingenious work cannot be foreseen or expressed in advance. As Kant puts it, "fine art cannot itself devise the rule by which it is to bring about its product. Since, however, a product can never be called art unless it is preceded by a rule, it must be nature in the subject (and through the attunement of his powers) that gives the rule to art, in other words, fine art is possible only as the product of genius."¹⁸⁴ Moreover, since the rule isn't supposed to "hover before the eyes of the artist,"¹⁸⁵ the new rule can only be discerned in retrospect when it becomes a guide for future works. This does not mean that the productions are wholly unruly, but only that rules didn't guide the production process. Instead, the rules are the *result* of the new work inspired by genius.

Upon first examination, one might expect those endowed with genius to be able to explain their works precisely because they serve to advance culture and set the (new) rule to art through their novel insights. But as established above, although genius has an

¹⁸³ Ibid., §46, p. 175, 308.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., §46, p. 175, 307.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., §45, p. 174, 307. Kant states, "There must be no hint that the rule was hovering before the artist's eyes and putting fetters on his mental powers."

essential role in the development of art and culture, it isn't necessarily a discursive one.¹⁸⁶ Kant makes clear that ingenious artists are no better equipped than non-artists to explain the new rules in art or the aesthetic ideas that they set forth in their works. The talent of genius is to *transmit* such ideas through works of art. Therefore, the excess of cognition spurred by aesthetic experience remains, even for those artists who are naturally talented in the production of art that is innovative and exemplary.

This is both counterintuitive in the sense set forth above, with respect to the expectations we have for genius, and intuitive in the following sense: It is easy to imagine an innovative, creative, ingenious artist – one who has advanced the field and thereby, culture itself – who is less than articulate about her art and what it means.¹⁸⁷ The artist, in such cases, proves unable to explain the very art she produced. This argument has a lineage connecting all the way back to Plato. In the *Apology* and the *Ion*, the character Socrates advances the claim that poets are the least equipped to explain their works' meaning or content because they were inspired by the gods.¹⁸⁸ Kant presents a similar argument insofar as genius inspires the artist through the “hand of nature;”¹⁸⁹ the artist is moved, but is unable to explain the production process or the ideas present in the work.

¹⁸⁶ See Cannon, footnote #25, p. 64.

¹⁸⁷ Take for instance, Andy Warhol and David Lynch. Both communicate relatively little about their own work, but it is debatable whether their expressions (or lack thereof) are due to an inability or an unwillingness to communicate about their work. Put differently, there may be a range of reasons for not communicating about one's work. Some artists may be terse due to a lack of knowledge or communicating ability (as articulated above) while others may be driven by a desire to protect their art through withholding information or courting mystery. I will return to this issue in Chapter Five.

¹⁸⁸ Plato. *Apology* in *Five Dialogues*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Inc., 2002., p. 27, 22b-d.

¹⁸⁹ Kant, §47, p. 177, 309. Cf. §47, p. 176, 308.

Genius is required to produce and advance fine art, just as taste is required in order to judge it.¹⁹⁰ Kant thereby distinguishes between the skills and talents required for production and reception, respectively. He *intertwines* genius and taste and makes them necessary complements to one another.¹⁹¹ Even as genius expands the sphere of expression, it also complicates the non-artist's ability to communicate about art. Because the rule does not precede the production, but emerges only afterward, there is no ready-to-hand guide to understanding or grappling with works of genius. Thus, clarity of expression in making judgments proves even more difficult when dealing with works of genius than in general cases because there is no established rule to follow in one's judgments of ingenious work. Those who exercise taste are not equipped to make sense of works of genius because they do not fit into the framework of conventional art. In this situation, a prospective judge of taste may be *silenced* by the work due to the excess of cognitive activity taking place that cannot be fully processed or put into linguistic terms. This excess may spur attempts to communicate that only partially capture the aesthetic experience at hand.

To summarize: works of genius embody a new way to mean. They give meaning new form and give form to new meanings. Works of genius reveal important insights into expression. In retrospect, these insights become the new rules that are set to art. It is not the *content* of these rules that concerns me here. Rather, the ramifications for meaning making and subsequent rule derivation are of especial interest due to their impact upon communication in the public sphere. Our silence before them indicates that

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., §48, p. 179, 311.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., §48, p. 181, 313. According to Kant, "a would-be work of fine art that manifests genius without taste, or another that manifests taste without genius" is not fine art, properly called. Lack of restraint and lack of spirit are both errors to be avoided in fine art. Cf., §49, p. 181, 313. As we shall see, Kant favors the restriction of genius rather than taste if the two conflict. Cf., §50.

works of genius open up conceptual space in which new ways of meaning emerge. These meanings expand the sphere of communication through their exemplary form.

The demand set forth by works of genius is double: 1) the demand to respond to / communicate with others about works of art via judgments of taste (*the demand set by all works of art); and 2) the demand to derive the rule that is set by works of genius *in order* to make communication about them possible in relation to the works that came before them. Put differently, works of genius redouble the demand to respond to works of art, making more persistent its force. Because of their confounding exemplarity, works of genius call out for increased communication with others through judgments of taste. As articulated above, this paradoxically leads to silence rather than communication in many cases.

C. Disciplining Nature (Part I): Taste Clips the Wings of Genius

Thus far, I have been focusing on how genius advances expression and culture through innovative and exemplary works of art. But I haven't yet explained the paradoxical nature of genius. While genius advances expression through art, this process isn't necessarily smooth or peaceful. Instead, it involves upheaval and challenge to the established order, due to the tension between genius and taste, which is to say, between nature and culture. As aforementioned, genius is nature in the subject; taste is the agent of culture that regulates or refines nature. Genius is expected to advance culture, but it must be "tamed" or "refined" before it can do so.

As genius moves beyond the strictures of taste and towards the establishment of new rules and modes of artistic expression, taste restricts it. The tension of this complex

and intrinsically antagonistic relationship is discharged when taste clips the wings of genius in order to make its expressions fit for the advancement of culture. Kant states:

Taste, like the power of judgment in general, consists in disciplining (or training) genius. It severely clips its wings, and makes it civilized, or polished; but at the same time it gives it guidance as to how far and over what it may spread while still remaining purposive. It introduces clarity and order into a wealth of thought and hence makes the ideas durable, fit for approval that is both lasting and universal, and [hence] for being followed by others and fit for an ever advancing culture.¹⁹²

Kant praises the imagination (and thereby genius) for provoking much thought that cannot be contained in a single concept,¹⁹³ for “mak[ing] reason think more,”¹⁹⁴ and for quickening the mental faculties through increased activity.¹⁹⁵ But when taste and genius come into conflict, Kant is all too willing to sacrifice this natural talent to the purposes of culture.¹⁹⁶ As stated above, wing clipping is done in order to refine ingenious ideas and make them durable and lasting. This durability is attained through civilizing genius’s expressions, making them fit for and understandable by culture. From there, we can deduce that taste clips the wings of genius for the sake of *communication*, through which culture advances.

For this reason, Kant claims that innovative but nonsensical expressions of genius must be tempered by taste:

In order [for a work] to be beautiful, it is not strictly necessary that [it] be rich and original in ideas, but it is necessary that the imagination in its freedom be commensurate with the lawfulness of the understanding. For if the imagination is left in lawless freedom, all its riches [in ideas] produce nothing but nonsense, and it is judgment that adapts the imagination to the understanding.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Ibid., §50, p. 188, 319.

¹⁹³ Ibid., §49, p. 182, 314.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., §49, p. 183, 314.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., §49, p. 183-184, 315.

¹⁹⁶ Kant is explicit about this point: *Only* when a conflict arises between taste and genius does he side with taste in products of art.

¹⁹⁷ Kant, §50, p. 188, 319.

Kant promotes the free play of imagination and understanding, but only until a conflict arises. Then the freedom of the imagination must submit to the rule-boundedness of the understanding. This restriction doesn't destroy the free play of the faculties. Rather, it forces the imagination to harmonize with the understanding in a way that limits its own freedom to an extent.¹⁹⁸

The passage above shows that Kant values understanding and communication over innovation in expression. As he frames the issue, innovative but nonsensical expressions are restricted for the sake of expressions that will make a "greater" contribution to mutual understanding. Kant states: "Therefore, if there is a conflict between these two properties [taste and genius] in a product, and something has to be sacrificed, then it should be on the side of genius; and judgment, which in matters [*Suchen*] of fine art bases its pronouncements on principles of its own, will sooner permit the imagination's freedom and wealth to be impaired than that the understanding be impaired."¹⁹⁹ While genius moves culture and communication forward, it is in jeopardy if its expressions are too wild or nonsensical.

While the pursuit of understanding is intuitively important, we must also consider the underlying intersubjective and cultural reasons why Kant values the preservation and advancement of communication through art so highly. In his conception of human character, some capacities and processes are natural, while others require training before

¹⁹⁸ Kant makes a similar point in the General Comment on the First Division of the *Analytic*: "It seems therefore that only a lawfulness without a law, and a subjective harmony of the imagination with the understanding without an objective harmony – where the presentation is referred to a determinate concept of an object – is compatible with the full lawfulness of the understanding (which has also been called purposiveness without a purpose and with the peculiarity of a judgment of taste" p. 92, 241. Here, Kant makes the point that in pure judgments of taste the imagination is *not* referred to a determinate concept of the object, even if the imagination obeys the laws of the understanding.

¹⁹⁹ Kant, §50, p. 188-189, 320.

they can be actualized. For instance, humans have a natural urge to society, but we are not automatically suited to such a life. Instead, we must be trained to achieve the “sociability that befits [our] humanity.”²⁰⁰ This means that we must check our natural urges and learn how to understand and communicate with each other for the sake of our individual vocations and society more generally. Achieving these goals requires the training and refinement of subjects; they require the civilization of our natures and of our expressions. The training of our natural inclinations is the genus of which wing clipping is one instance. Put more strongly, the demands of sociability and the demands of taste are enmeshed with each other for Kant.

Taste furthers what everyone’s natural inclination demands: the establishment and development of society through the promotion of sociability and communication. Social communication – even of, or especially of, our feelings – is valuable according to Kant. Therefore, taste furthers society and culture through clipping the wings of genius to promote mutual understanding rather than nonsensical innovation. “Genius is responsible for the idea, taste for its universal expression,” as Joseph Cannon states.²⁰¹ Humans must be trained to develop civilized tastes and to communicate their judgments in order to achieve their vocation as rational, civilized, and moral agents. Communication brings together our natural urge for society and the not quite natural – the trained – drive for sociability. Sociability must become second nature in order to advance culture.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Ibid., §60, p. 231.

²⁰¹ Cannon, footnote #19, p. 63-64.

²⁰² Higher ends and tastes are interconnected with the training and refinement that allow us to achieve our vocation as rational and moral agents. I will develop this point in greater detail in Part II of my discussion of the disciplining of nature, based on the culture of discipline in Part II of the *Critique of Judgment*.

Keeping this argument about the importance of understanding and communication in mind, we must still interrogate whether wing clipping achieves the end of promoting and increasing communication, or whether it inhibits communication. The severity of the language that Kant utilizes regarding taste and genius exposes his anxiety about the matter; we should all be concerned about restrictions on aesthetic expression. Kant makes clear that wing clipping isn't about refining genius in a gentle manner, but about doing so in a *severe* fashion. A close examination reveals Kant's aggressive tone: "disciplining," "training," "severely," "civilized," "polished," "clarity," "order," "durable." Such language indicates that Kant simultaneously views genius as a dangerous force – because it threatens order and culture – and as one that is necessary to the advancement of culture. Therefore, Kant asserts that genius needs to be disciplined in order to make "safe" and "durable" contributions to culture. Thinking through what it would take to bring order to the wealth of thought introduced by genius reveals that only a firm and perhaps ruthless hand (and one bearing shears, no less) could combat the wild innovation of unfettered genius. Taste will stop at nothing to civilize genius, despite the fact that it is impossible to fully achieve this end.

Because works of genius serve as exemplary models for others, they must be resilient enough to endure clipping by taste. "A certain *boldness* of expression, and in general some deviation from the common rule, is entirely fitting for a genius; it is however not worthy of imitation, but in itself always remains a defect that [any] one must try to eliminate, though genius has, as it were, a privilege to allow the defect to remain [anyway], because the inimitable [element] in the momentum of his spirit would be

impaired by timorous caution.”²⁰³ Taking the restrictions of taste into account, genius must nonetheless be bold enough to advance expression by breaking new ground through its meaningful form. By the same token, wing clipping must not be timid or overly cautious; it must be bold enough to check genius sufficiently, to check those “natural things”²⁰⁴ that inspire it and move the agent to produce works of art in the first place. As such, both genius and taste must be sufficiently bold in order to effectively stake out their positions with respect to expression.

D. Dialectic of Taste

The role of taste I have been examining thus far presents a stark contrast to the predominant formulation of taste as “disinterested interest” in *The Critique of Judgment*. When considered in conjunction with the act of wing clipping, taste establishes and enforces the norms of culture. It is the “quasher of genius.” Disinterested taste, on the other hand, judges art apart from purposes or interests. In order to insure the purity of judgments, Kant says we must remove all interest from our considerations of art. “All interest ruins a judgment of taste and deprives it of its impartiality.”²⁰⁵ We must direct our attention to the mere form of purposiveness in art, so that our liking is without a concept.²⁰⁶ Put differently, we like art because it exhibits purposiveness without a purpose. Connecting our judgments of taste to particular purposes would be contrary to the aim of art. Therefore, genius would be protected by disinterested taste because pure judgments are unclouded by ulterior motives or purposes, such as safeguarding culture or

²⁰³ Kant, §49, p. 187, 318, emphasis in original.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., §83. I will deal with this notion when I connect the restrictions upon genius to the restrictions of culture that Kant articulates in Part II of the *Critique of Judgment*.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., §13, p. 68, 223.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., §11, p. 66, 221.

eliminating nonsense. As Kant states, “When such a judgment is pure, it connects liking or disliking directly with the mere *contemplation* of the object, irrespective of its use or any purpose.”²⁰⁷ Innovative nonsense, the target of wing clipping, serves no purpose apart from free play. A pure judgment of taste regarding a work that exhibits this characteristic would not be compelled by the question of the purpose it serves. In other words, a pure judgment of taste disregards whether the art advances communication and culture. Taste, in this light, has a protective role in relation to genius because it is not driven to restrict any purposes whatsoever, including those of genius.

How can we reconcile these two senses of taste? Is taste disinterested interest in art, and thereby the protector of genius, or is it the enforcer of cultural norms and the restrictor of genius? This question is set in motion through the interpretation of the elimination of nonsense and the promotion of understanding and communication as a hidden purpose by which taste proceeds. If taste moves to eradicate certain kinds of expressions and to secure others, then it is not disinterested after all. Wing clipping performed under the guise of advancing culture can be used to cover over insidious purposes, even if this was not the original intention behind the restriction of genius.²⁰⁸ Insofar as Kant makes clear that the purposes associated with wing clipping are interested, the resultant judgments of taste would be impure, hence not properly judgments of taste at all. Yet it is taste that is the agent of wing clipping. Several questions emerge from this ambiguity: Can we be certain that our judgments are pure and uncompromised by interest? Can we be clear about what motivates our judgments? How can we reconcile these seemingly opposed senses of taste?

²⁰⁷ Ibid., “General Comment on the First Division of the Analytic,” p. 92, 242, emphasis in original.

²⁰⁸ See my comments about the abuse of power in community formation in IV., third moment, p. 34.

One potential solution to the dialectic of taste lies in Kant's discussion of "our empirical interest in the beautiful." As if in rejoinder to my worry about the motivations behind restrictions of genius, Kant states:

That a judgment of taste by which we declare something to be beautiful must not have an interest *as its determining basis* has been established sufficiently above.²⁰⁹ But it does not follow from this that, after the judgment has been made as a pure aesthetic one, an interest cannot be connected with it. This connection, however, must always be only indirect. In other words, we must think of taste as first of all connected with something else, so that with the liking of mere reflection on an object there can [then] be connected, in addition, a pleasure *in the existence* of the object (and all interest consists in pleasure in the existence of an object.²¹⁰

No interest can serve as the determining basis for a judgment of taste. An indirect interest may develop and be connected to our judgments only after the fact without compromising their purity. Kant states, "This [additional interest] may be something empirical, viz., an inclination inherent in human nature, or something intellectual, viz., the will's property of being determinable a priori by reason. Both of these involve a liking for the existence of an object and hence can lay a foundation for an interest in something that we have already come to like on its own account and without any interest whatever."²¹¹ If interest is connected afterwards and in an indirect fashion, Kant finds no cause for concern about the purity of the judgment.

This solution seems deeply problematic. If the advancement of culture is the interest or purpose that is added after the fact of initial liking, the potential for slippage between liking and interest (and the proper timing of each) is extremely likely. This is even more probable in cases where the agents seek to cover over their interests in their

²⁰⁹ Pluhar points us towards the first moment of the *Critique of Judgment*, §1-6, 203-211.

²¹⁰ Kant, §41, p. 163, 296, emphasis in original.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, §41, p. 163, 296.

judgments of taste, especially if they wield political or cultural power. When considered in conjunction with restrictions such as wing clipping, the likelihood of this slippage is culturally and politically hazardous and ought to be of great concern to all. Now, perhaps, my concern here regards the practices of judgment and wing clipping rather than Kant's theoretical account of them. Nonetheless, the potential for deviation from his carefully constructed and articulated system, especially in terms of smuggling in hidden interests and purposes, is extremely high. As Kant suggests, "taste must be an ability one has oneself,"²¹² but one that must be cultivated by everyone through cultural training and discipline. So the question of whether "fit for an ever advancing culture" is a norm that harbors anti-aesthetic purposes hinges upon several questions: Whose culture? Whose authority? Whose purposes? Training for what ends?

To summarize, when posed with the choice, Kant sides with taste over genius when they come into conflict. The inspiring force that moves individuals to produce art is "too bold" or "too deviant" and is restricted so that its expressions can become more understandable. While the imagination is praised for quickening the mind, attuning the mental powers, and spurring further activity through works of genius, Kant claims this natural force or predisposition needs discipline. Instead of allowing cognitive free play with works of art to remain unimpeded, Kant seeks to restrict ingenious productions by making them conform more fully to rule-governed understanding. He views the refinement and civilization of individuals (and their expressions) through training and taste as a positive move for the advancement of understanding and culture. As such, while the cognition involved in judgment continues, the works themselves (and their

²¹² Ibid., §17, p. 79, 232.

meanings) have already been clipped at the point of production. Thus, cognition has been limited because its object, the work of art, has been restricted by taste. This limitation extends to the level of judgment, because expression has already been affected by restrictions in the sphere of communication and culture.

E. Disciplining Nature (Part II): Purposiveness and Culture

In this section, I connect the restriction on expression found in Part I of the *Critique of Judgment* – taste clipping the wings of genius – with a similar restriction found in Part II – the culture of discipline. While each mode of restriction proceeds differently, both impact expression through marginalization for the sake of culture. I excavate the way Kant describes humanity and culture in order to expose how the relationship among art, purposes, and culture carries across Part I and Part II of the *Critique of Judgment* in an unexpected way. The trajectory of this portion of the argument turns on how culture limits expression through taming or disciplining the natural aspects of human subjects. I build upon the notion of taste as the enforcer of cultural norms in order to show the intimate relation between the restrictive power of taste and the culture of discipline.

Kant describes humans as creatures that occupy a special position due to their capacity to reason and to recognize the limitations of their faculties. He is quick to point out, however, that reason alone isn't enough to raise humanity above the conditions and requirements of embodiment. Kant states: "Nature [...] is very far from having adopted him [human being] as its special darling and benefited him in preference to other animals, but has in fact spared him no more than any other animal from its destructive workings:

plague, famine, flood, frost, attacks from other animals large or small, and so on.”²¹³

Humanity can’t eliminate its material needs and inclinations or prevent nature’s destructive power from having its effect. Through rational thought and innovation, however, humanity can mitigate the impact of such hardships. This is due to another factor that distinguishes rational humanity: its ability to design its own purposes, the aptitude for which is developed by culture.

Man is indeed the only being on earth that has understanding and hence an ability to set himself purposes of his own choice, and in this respect he holds the title lord of nature; and if we regard nature as a teleological system, then it is man’s vocation to be the ultimate purpose of nature, but always subject to a condition: he must have the understanding and the will to give both nature and himself reference to a purpose that can be independent of nature, self-sufficient, and a final purpose.²¹⁴

But what sorts of purposes does humanity set for itself? One possibility is to use intelligence to create tools that minimize the grip and impact of nature. Loosening nature’s grip allows humans to cultivate and pursue higher purposes of their own design. The attainment of these higher purposes is the definition of the advancement of culture.

The ability to create one’s own purposes, however, is no guarantee that those chosen will be good, beneficial, or moral in nature. In other words, humans are free to design purposes that are constructive or destructive, civilized or barbaric: “[M]an’s own absurd *natural predispositions* land him in further troubles that he thinks up himself and [make him] put others of his own species in great misery through oppressive domination, barbaric wars, etc., and [so] man himself does all he can to work for the destruction of his

²¹³ Ibid., §83, p. 318, 430.

²¹⁴ Ibid., §83, p. 318, 431.

own species.”²¹⁵ Despite such proclivities, Kant asserts humanity’s ability to overcome natural desires and inclinations through rationality and the ability to set purposes for itself.

Hence among all of his purposes in nature there remains only this [one], as that which nature can accomplish with a view to a final purpose outside of nature, and this [one] may therefore be regarded as nature’s ultimate purpose: It is a formal and subjective condition, namely, man’s aptitude in general for setting himself purposes, and for using nature (independently of [the element of] nature in man’s determination of purposes) as a means [for achieving them] in conformity with the maxims of his free purposes generally. Producing in a rational being an aptitude for purposes generally (hence [in a way that leaves] that being free) is *culture*. Hence only culture can be the ultimate purpose that we have cause to attribute to nature with respect to the human species.²¹⁶

In this passage, Kant makes clear that culture is the highest purpose humans can achieve through nature. But what does Kant mean by culture?²¹⁷ The brief answer to this query is: practices that are free from compulsion.²¹⁸ Culture includes the development of a society of individuals living peaceably with one another, cooperating in order to establish morality through just laws and good customs. This is the embodiment of what Kant refers to in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* as the “kingdom of ends” in which self-legislating beings create their own laws and abide by the same, treating themselves and others with dignity and respect.²¹⁹ Such reflective moral behavior performed by agents acting out of duty rather than inclination is one of the primary aims of civilization. As such, morality is the purpose for which humans strive. In turn,

²¹⁵ Ibid., §83, p. 318, 430, emphasis in original. Here, Kant merely aims to point out the effects unchecked human inclinations can have upon the sorts of purposes designed. He goes on to suggest that these natural predispositions ought to be reined in or disciplined for the sake of culture. Depending on how this disciplining is to be achieved, however, it may be the case that the manner by which civilization is achieved is itself uncivilized. I will return to this point momentarily.

²¹⁶ Ibid., §83, p. 319, 431, emphasis in original.

²¹⁷ See my definition of culture in the Introduction, p. 2.

²¹⁸ I will return to the question of how free from compulsion cultured humans actually are when I get to the notion of the culture of discipline.

²¹⁹ Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary Gregor. In *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues*. 3rd Edition. Ed. Cahn and Markie. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, Section II, p.289, 292-294.

humans may cultivate their capacity for purposes (and purposiveness) by setting more complex and specific purposes for themselves. In particular, they can design purposes that contain only the *form* of purposiveness, purposes that are not related to any particular concept of the good.²²⁰ In other words, humans can produce works of art as an aspect of their self-shaping. In this light, even culture itself is a human purpose.

In order to take up culture as a purpose, subjects must be self-conscious and reflect upon their experiences. We must practice our purposive natures in order to achieve such goals. Put in Aristotelian terms, humans must actualize their capacities and hone their skills through action, practice, and habituation.²²¹ But how does culture relate to nature in the human subject, i.e., to our human nature? In Part I of *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant answers this question with the relationship between genius and taste. In Part II, however, Kant explores this question from a slightly different perspective.

[W]hat is it, within man himself, that is a purpose and that he is to further through his connection with nature? This purpose must either be such as can be fulfilled by nature itself in its beneficence, or else [must] be man's aptitude and skill for [pursuing] various purposes for which he can use nature (outside or within him). On the first alternative the purpose of nature would be man's *happiness*,²²² on the second his *culture*.²²³

It is on the latter of these two purposes that Kant most focuses. The development of purposes involved in the advancement of civilization and culture requires the cultivation

²²⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §11.

²²¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Terence Irwin. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1999. See Books I and II, and in particular, II, chp. 1, §3-4.

²²² In the *Critique of Judgment* and in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Kant dismisses happiness as a serious candidate for the highest purpose humans can set themselves. In the *Groundwork*, Kant claims that humans merely have an *indirect* duty to happiness in that without it, it is easier to succumb to the temptations of acting in an immoral fashion. Happiness, then, serves as a safeguarding condition that contributes to the ability to perform one's duty as a moral agent, but isn't the ultimate purpose of humanity. See *Groundwork*, Section I, p. 276.

²²³ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §83, p. 317, 429-430.

of our capacity to design purposes, or what Kant refers to as the “culture of skill.”²²⁴ This is the actualization and practice of the human aptitude for purposiveness. Kant points out that some of the higher purposes of culture, such as art and science, are its “less necessary ingredients.”²²⁵ He recognizes how these aspects of the “culture of skill” require resources and leisure that are not available to all members of society.²²⁶ Hence, culture, at its most basic level, is based upon inequality of condition according to Kant. The majority takes care of the needs of others, while the minority is free to pursue higher ends that include art and science.²²⁷

While seemingly tangential to the philosophical point at hand, this inequality might be a necessary cost of the “progress” and “advancement” of culture. If the culture of skill is made possible only by unfree labor of the majority of the population, then the resources and leisure afforded to the few that are meant to advance the whole are really to the detriment and inequality of others. In reality, however, both groups are unfree in some respects. The majority is unfree in the sense that they are subservient to interests of the whole that are nonetheless not in their own interest; the minority is unfree creatively due to the cultural pressure to make their expressions not just fit for culture, but suitable to contribute to and advance it. This privileged minority is both supported by culture and confined by it.²²⁸

Kant tries to equate, or at least compare, these restrictions upon freedom, but ultimately I find his claims untenable and take issue with his normative account of

²²⁴ Ibid., §83, p. 319, 431.

²²⁵ Ibid., §83, p. 320, 432.

²²⁶ Ibid., §83, p. 319-321, 432-434.

²²⁷ Ibid., §83, p. 319-320, 432.

²²⁸ Recall the restrictions upon genius detailed above.

progress. He states, “These others keep the majority in a state of oppression, hard labor, and little enjoyment, even though some of the culture of the higher class does gradually spread to the lower also. But on both sides trouble increases with equal vigor as culture progresses.”²²⁹ While difficulty and restlessness increase for both, it is hardly defensible to assert that these two groups are equally restricted or even that this imbalance is for the overall good or improvement of society.²³⁰ This trickle down notion of culture is cold comfort to the majority who are oppressed and made to serve through hard labor. Kant seems aware that the majority pays the highest price for the advancement of culture without being able to fully reap its benefits, as he suggests that only *some* of the benefits of culture will gradually reach the other members of society who have paved the way for it and made it possible. The restrictions put upon the majority are of a different and more severe sort than those put upon individuals endowed with genius because they are uncompensated for, even if the advancement of culture means unhappiness for both groups. While restrictions upon freedom are not always warning signs of infringements upon rights, they are points for critical reflection. We must be wary, lest these restrictions shift from safeguards to encroachments through a lack of watchfulness on the part of citizens.²³¹

While at first blush, the limitations upon the minority may not seem to be of a comparably serious sort, I aim to establish the weight of these restrictions upon expression and innovation for all segments of culture. The restrictions that culture places

²²⁹ Kant, §83, p. 320, 432.

²³⁰ I do not want to overstate the point. Kant doesn’t quite defend the inequalities of these restrictions. He also doesn’t do enough to convince me of their justification under the notion of “progress” or “advancement,” either. It is an important and problematic issue worth further examination.

²³¹ Immanuel Kant. “What Is Enlightenment?” from *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Lewis White Beck. New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1986.

upon the privileged minority dictate what sorts of expressions are fit for culture, and more importantly, which are fit to *advance* it. While thus far in the argument, I have sought to distinguish the restrictions on higher and lower social groups, now we must turn to their connection as seen through limitations upon expression. Restrictions may begin in a “top-down” fashion, but all members of culture, not just those who craft new expressions and new ways to mean, will feel their implications. This point applies to the restrictive impact that wing clipping has upon expression.

Along with the aforementioned “culture of skill” by which individuals develop their capacity to design purposes, the “culture of discipline” guides humans towards our vocation as rational beings through training and restriction. It directs us towards our humanity and the recognition of higher purposes for ourselves. Furthermore, the culture of discipline attempts to temper the “crudeness” and “vehemence” of our inclinations in order to focus upon the development and refinement of our selves:

But we also cannot fail to notice that nature [within us] pursues the purpose of making room for the development of our humanity, (namely, the inclinations [to] enjoyment). [For we have] the fine art[s] and the sciences, which involve a universally communicable pleasure as well as elegance and refinement, and through these they make man, not indeed morally [*sittlich*] better for [life in] society, but still civilized [*gesittet*] for it: they make great headway against the tyranny of man’s propensity to the senses, and so prepare him for a sovereignty in which reason alone is to dominate; and the evils that either nature or our quarrelsomeness and selfishness visit on us do also summon, increase, and steel the soul’s forces to keep them from succumbing to those evils, and so let us feel a hidden aptitude within us for higher purposes.²³²

Thus, the culture of discipline is involved in the recognition and promotion of rational ends and the pursuit of higher purposes. One of the primary purposes of culture is to train individuals to recognize the rightful dominance of reason over desire and inclination

²³² Kant. *Critique of Judgment*, §83, p. 321, 433-434.

and to obey the demands of duty. The civilization of individuals through the control of desires requires the domination of certain aspects of human nature:

The culture of discipline [...] consists in the liberation of the will from the despotism of desires, a despotism that rivets us to *certain natural things* and renders us unable to do our own selecting; we allow ourselves to be fettered by the impulses that nature gave us only as guides that we would not neglect or even injure our animal characteristics, whereas in fact we are free enough to tighten or slacken, to lengthen or shorten them, as the purposes of reason require.²³³

Kant's expression is vague. In German, "Gewisse Naturdinge"²³⁴ literally means "certain natural things." But what are the "natural things" to which we are riveted? Why doesn't Kant specify what he has in mind here? The vagueness is intriguing in that the passage could apply to and have implications for both morality and aesthetics.

On the one hand, this passage addresses how to negotiate and adhere to imperatives of morality and mitigate the influence of inclination, interest, and desire; in other words, it regards how to civilize the natural elements of human subjectivity in order to live in orderly society with others. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant fills this picture out by characterizing other subjects as the limiting condition of our freedom. But while they limit our freedom, and are therefore hateful to us, other people also make our freedom possible.²³⁵ Kant thus directs us towards our humanity as something worthy of consideration over and above our animal characteristics. In turn, this leads us towards our sociability and our duty to live in harmony and accord with others. This is why we must try to develop habits that are beneficial not only for ourselves, but for the society in which we live. This connects back to Kant's comment about our ability to "tighten or slacken" our impulses as reason sees fit. The cultivation

²³³ Ibid., §83, p. 319, 432., emphasis mine.

²³⁴ Immanuel Kant. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Hamburg, Germany: Felix Meiner Publishing, 1924., §83.

²³⁵ Kant, *Groundwork*, Section Two, p. 289-290.

of morality or virtue based upon deliberation and choice serves social and political purposes. The ability to make decisions that are free from desires or inclinations is a sign of refinement, cultivation, and discipline on the part of subjects that contributes both to the individual good and the good of the group.

On the other hand, the conflict between subjectivity and nature in the passage about the culture of discipline refers us back to the relationship of genius and taste. In other words, the “natural things” to which Kant refers may be interpreted as “nature in the subject,” or “genius.” Genius, recall, is necessary to the advancement of culture, but also threatening to it. What allows individuals with genius to make contributions to art and culture is the nature within them. Nature is what the subject cannot ever be rid of, despite the efforts of the culture of discipline to minimize its grip upon them. Even if “taste clips the wings of genius,” thereby refining its expressions, genius still presses forward in order to express itself. Genius is an unyielding and undeniable force. This is why those endowed with genius are less free than other agents and therefore are always at great risk from the imperatives of advancing culture.

It is important to point out that an individual can never escape her nature. The force of genius in the subject needs to express itself, and in particular, to express aesthetic ideas. According to Kant, those endowed with genius are unfree because they cannot control the source of the ideas they put forth through works of art. Genius (or nature) renders us unable to do our own selecting and needs to be shaped by the purposes of reason in order to liberate the will and reveal our aptitude for higher purposes. Due to this lack of control in expression, culture aims to rein in this potentially dangerous force. Genius continues to press for expression and culture continues to impose order upon it.

Because culture's ongoing project is to civilize subjects, this conflict plays itself out again and again.

Ingenious individuals are called by nature to express themselves, but they are pressured by taste and culture to express themselves in some ways rather than others. As a talent, genius is despotic and unyielding. Perhaps, then, we can interpret the “natural things” to which we are riveted in §83 as genius, or “nature in the subject.” To further align these passages, we can now say that genius “renders us unable to do our own selecting.” It is a talent for expression that is indomitable; we are forced to express ingenious ideas. Even if refined and clipped by taste, genius continues to give form to expression. The point that Kant is making in §83 is that through training, we can “tighten or slacken, [...] lengthen or shorten” our impulses, and under this interpretation, our forceful talents “as the purposes of reason require.” This move is analogous to the restrictive power of taste clipping the wings of genius for the sake of culture.²³⁶

²³⁶ The implications of taste clipping the wings of genius unite the moral and aesthetic dimensions through the pivotal notion of purposiveness, bringing the social and political dimensions together more clearly. On this reading, the restrictions under discussion would be about art and expression very explicitly, rather than restrictions in the abstract. This interpretation is bolstered by the connections Kant makes between fine art and morality: “For the pleasure we take in purposive form is also culture, and it attunes the spirit to ideas, and so makes it receptive to more such pleasure and entertainment [...] Unless we connect the fine arts, closely or remotely, with moral ideas, which alone carry with them an independent liking,” the mind will be dissatisfied with itself and with the object. See Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, §52, p. 195-196, 326. Because Kant sees morality and taste as purposes that ought to be cultivated in the subject, he aims to connect them to one another towards the end of Part I.

After enumerating the similarities and differences between the beautiful and the morally good, Kant links them through the attunement of the faculties and a manner of speaking associated with morality. He states:

The common understanding also habitually bears this analogy in mind, and beautiful objects of nature or of art are often called by names that seem to presuppose that we are judging [these objects] morally. We call buildings or trees majestic and magnificent, or landscapes cheerful and gay; even colors are called innocent, humble, or tender, because they arouse sensations in us that are *somehow* analogous to the consciousness we have in a mental state produced by moral judgments [...] for taste presents the imagination as admitting, even in its freedom, of determination that is purposive for the understanding, and it teaches us to like even objects of sense freely, even apart from sensible charm.

Kant continues to expand upon this point: “Plainly, then, the propaedeutic that will truly establish our taste consists in developing our moral ideas and in cultivating [*Kultur*] moral feeling; for only when sensibility is made to harmonize with this feeling can genuine taste take on a definite, unchangeable form.”²³⁷ Genius poses a challenge not to the unchangeable *form* of taste, meaning how the faculties harmonize with one another, but to the unchangeability of the *particularities* of taste at a certain time and place.²³⁸ That is, genius challenges the established rules and boundaries of taste and expands upon them through innovation and exemplarity, even as the subjective universality of judgments is maintained.²³⁹ As genius expands the sphere of expression, it poses a threat to status quo ideas of art, taste, and communication.

Perhaps Kant’s equivocation in §83 isn’t due to vacillation after all, but is more of a problem that stems from a lack of ready-to-hand terminology that would characterize the forces of nature in an effective way. To that end, the ambiguity suggests how intertwined morality and aesthetics are for Kant. Because he does not specify a particular referent in this passage, perhaps he means to indicate the way in which culture involves restrictions that are both moral and aesthetic. Since the need to check our natural and

(Ibid., §59, p. 229-230, 354, emphasis mine.) Although Kant asserts that there is a connection between moral judgment and aesthetic judgment, he does not fill out the analogy completely. While the good is liked through its concept, the beautiful is liked directly through sensation. (Ibid., §59, p. 229, 353-354.) Perhaps what Kant has in mind is that while art exhibits purposiveness without a purpose (without a determinate concept), it nonetheless serves a purpose for us. This is shown in the above passage, but also in the way Kant views art as an agent of the advancement of culture. In part, this ability to advance culture has to do with what art requires of subjects cognitively, linguistically, and intersubjectively. As a result, this passage illustrates the connection between purposiveness of mind and the cultivation of the higher purposes of culture.

²³⁷ Ibid., §60, p. 232, 356. J.H. Bernard translates this passage slightly differently: “Hence it appears plain that the true propaedeutic for the foundation of taste is the development of moral ideas and the culture of moral feeling; because it is only when sensibility is brought into agreement with this that genuine taste can assume a definite invariable form.” *The Critique of Judgment*. Trans. J.H. Bernard. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000., §60, p. 255.

²³⁸ Cannon, p. 61.

²³⁹ Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, §46, p. 175-176, 307-308.

personal inclinations is so well established in the *Groundwork Concerning the Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the turn to the aesthetic dimension of this issue in the *Critique of Judgment* is fitting.

Kant is cognizant of the innovation and exemplarity genius offers to art and culture, but he does not fully examine what could be lost in disciplining nature and clipping genius's wings. While he recognizes the need for genius, Kant doesn't fully account for the productive potential of the struggle to express ourselves when met with works that thwart our expectations and exceed our conceptual arsenals. The ability to communicate about challenging works in a creative fashion opens up the space for innovation in expression and for the expansion of the linguistic and aesthetic spheres.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated the unique demands set by art and the problems in expression that accompany them. I have established the demands of art to communicate and the inability to fully expound aesthetic ideas, set forth the persistent and unfulfillable social demand of art to communicate our judgments of taste to other people, and explored how genius exacerbates the demand to respond because it sets the (new) rule to art. Further, I have examined the subjective dimension of our response to art, the intersubjective dimension of individual interaction with other subjects, and the cultural dimension by which our responses are guided and restricted by the norms of the society in which we live.

The fulcrum of this chapter is the conflict between genius (nature) and taste (culture). In the next two chapters, I unpack the notion of wing clipping to investigate how innovative or exemplary expression is put under pressure by the "civilizing" forces

of culture. It is important to examine the potential risks that such forces pose to the development of new forms of expression and how they may result in marginalization or censorship.

Chapter Three

Silence and Wing Clipping

I. Introduction

Recall that according to Kant, taste clips the wings of genius in order to make its contributions fit to enrich and advance culture. As Chapter Two has shown, genius must be restricted so that its works will be comprehensible to culture. In order to set the (new) rule to art, genius's contributions must be both innovative *and* exemplary. Therefore, Kant asserts that taste must temper genius to help insure genius's place in culture as well as its impact upon it. But the antagonistic relationship between genius and taste raises a concern about the freedom of aesthetic expression. If genius serves as the engine of culture and is necessary for its improvement, why restrict or limit it? Why not give this creative force free reign? If the wings of genius are clipped, will the innovative character of its expressions be damaged? Wouldn't the freedom of genius provide an opportunity for even greater contributions to culture?

I explore three different interpretations of wing clipping according to the degree of the cuts: (1) not restricting genius by not clipping its wings; (2) minimal or "tasteful" clipping; and (3) severe wing clipping or severing. The first two interpretations will be discussed in this chapter, and the third interpretation in the next. We will gain insight into the effects and implications of wing clipping by examining these various options and how each is related to silence or silencing. Each scenario will illuminate a different way to understand silence and silencing in the arts and thus will explore terrain that was not fully developed in *The Critique of Judgment*.

In the first case, the lack of restraint on genius seems to present a liberating option. Without taste to clip its wings, genius should be able to soar to new heights of expression. As my argument will show, however, unclipped genius does not get recognized by or included in culture. Instead, uncomprehended, it expresses itself outside of culture altogether. This lack of recognition and inclusion displaces and silences genius. Thus, even though culture does not *actively* censor genius, it nonetheless excludes its contributions. In order to explore this sort of silencing, I investigate the unrestricted force of the Dionysian as presented in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. In this section of argument, I also examine *Needcompany's King Lear* as an example of the incomprehensibility of an unrestrained work of genius. Because Jan Lauwers, the production's director, refuses to restrict his vision or to temper it for the sake of his audience, his work effectively silences itself because it is too free. While at first blush, it might seem that a lack of restraint would lead to more freely creative works of genius, their wings are nonetheless clipped due to a lack of comprehensibility.

In the case of minimal wing clipping, I look at cases of marginalization and near exclusion. The exclusion of Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* from the 1917 Society of Independent Artists show is an example. This rejection was important because the work challenged conceptions of art, medium, and decency, and thereby threatened the standards of taste and morality. The piece was so controversial that it was ultimately rejected from an open show in which all submissions were supposed to be welcomed and included. For the purposes of the current discussion, I consider how something like tasteful wing clipping was involved in these influential rejections of avant-garde works of

art. In this connection, I examine Peter Bürger's notion of the avant-garde in order to illuminate tasteful wing clipping.

In the third and final case, to be examined in Chapter Four, I investigate maximal wing clipping and censorship in the arts. In particular, I examine the silencing of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* through its removal from Federal Plaza in New York. While many people polled about this sculpture did not object to its presence, it was nonetheless removed, leaving an ugly gash on the surface of the plaza. Allegations that the sculpture broke up the space in a negative way and disrupted the movement of persons through it were enough to cause its removal, despite the fact that it had been commissioned by the General Services Administration's Art-in-Architecture program in the first place.²⁴⁰ Because the work had been sanctioned by the power invested in the commission, its removal raises questions about the status of public art and the authority to oversee and govern it. Who has the ability to permit and / or prohibit public art? What is the role of (public) taste in censorship? In Chapter Four, I continue this line of argumentation by investigating the exclusionary power of publics in terms of Nancy Fraser's "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." Afterwards, I deal with cults that communicate internally rather than with the mainstream public. Here I rely on concepts borrowed from Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility."

²⁴⁰ Gregg Horowitz. "Public Art / Public Space: The Spectacle of the *Tilted Arc* Controversy." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1) (Winter 1996): 8-14, p. 8.

II. The Dionysian as a Lack of Wing Clipping

A. Kant and Nietzsche

Upon first examination, Kant's and Nietzsche's aesthetic theories seem to stem from and react to different influences and deal with different art forms. They also come to very different conclusions about art and how we respond to it. As Nietzsche states in the introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy*, "I tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant's and Schopenhauer's spirit and taste!"²⁴¹ In his "Attempt at Self-Criticism," written several years after the book's initial publication, Nietzsche suggests that he should have had more courage to express his ideas in his own way rather than borrowing the language of philosophers who came before him. More important than his note about language and tone is Nietzsche's claim that his views about art and tragedy are directly opposed to those of Kant and Schopenhauer in spite of his mode of delivery.²⁴² Contra Nietzsche's assertions in this preface, I aim to highlight the similarities between him and Kant as regards the role of genius in the production and reception of art. After tracing out the affinities of the aesthetic theories of these philosophers, I explore the effects of unrestrained Dionysianism.

Through an examination of the force of the Dionysian if it were to go unrestrained, I explore the implications of not clipping genius's wings. While it appears that not

²⁴¹ Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967., Introduction §6, p. 24.

²⁴² The "Attempt at Self-Criticism" is a retrospective look at *The Birth of Tragedy*. In *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*, Julian Young warns us to be wary about the later Nietzsche's portrayal of his earlier thought. Because these reflections were expressed after his break with Schopenhauer and Wagner, to whom Nietzsche was indebted in *The Birth of Tragedy*, we must consider the reasons for the severity of his tone here. The work was originally published in 1872; by the time Nietzsche wrote this introduction in 1886, he was more than ready to disavow his early influences. This does not mean that Nietzsche can eliminate their imprint on his early work, but only that he would like to do so later in his career. See Julian Young. *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992., pp. 27-30.

clipping the wings of genius would remove the difficulties that result from the restriction of the creative engine of culture, this scenario merely shifts the problem of silence and silencing into a new arena. More precisely, this situation shifts the problem of silencing outside of the arena entirely.²⁴³ When genius is free to express itself without limitation, its contributions cannot be comprehended by culture due to the excessive cognition they spur. Instead, its productions and their significance exit culture – and hence are not part of pushing culture forward. While these expressions are not forced out of culture through the violence of wing clipping, they silence themselves due to their lack of comprehensibility. Put another way, unrestrained genius is silenced by its lack of recognition and acceptance from culture. Although these ingenious expressions are articulated outside the confines of culture and may continue to buzz with excessive meaning there, culture does not have the tools to make sense of them. So too, the unrestrained work doesn't have the tools to demand that sense be made of it. The excess of ideas presented by genius causes these ingenious works to be received in silence – or not to be received at all – due to their complexity and incomprehensibility. As a result, we might say that works of unrestrained genius silence *themselves*.

According to Kant, genius is required to produce art, and socially enculturated taste is required to judge it. “*Judging* beautiful objects to be such requires *taste*; but fine art itself, i.e., the *production* of such objects, requires *genius*.”²⁴⁴ Genius is rarer than taste. Not everyone is inspired by nature to produce works of genius, but all are expected to cultivate taste. As Kant states, “genius is nature’s favorite and so must be

²⁴³ In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes the spectators as “overlooking” the action of the play in an arena or amphitheater. My contention is that the unrestrained Dionysian moves the action outside of the theater and outside of the polis entirely. I will return to this point shortly.

²⁴⁴ Immanuel Kant. *The Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987., §48, 311, emphasis in original.

regarded as a rare phenomenon.”²⁴⁵ Further, Kant adds, “his example gives rise to a school for other good minds...”²⁴⁶ The future of art depends upon the exemplary innovations of genius. But while genius is extremely valuable, Kant argues, taste is important because it safeguards and regulates culture. As Kant states, no work of fine art is without taste either because taste’s role in relation to art is to make genius’s rare contributions fit to advance general culture.²⁴⁷ For this reason, taste makes genius’s contributions comprehensible and thereby secures their place within culture. As a result, the innovative but nonsensical offerings of genius cannot be permitted full play in culture.

Both genius and taste are required for art even though they oppose or restrict each other. This Kantian relationship is reconsidered in Nietzsche’s characterization of the opposing forces of the Dionysian and Apollinian in *The Birth of Tragedy*. As Nietzsche states, “the continuous development of art is bound up with the *Apollinian* and *Dionysian* duality – just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliation.”²⁴⁸ The conflict in tragic art depends upon the different tendencies and aims of the Greek gods of Apollo, the god and guardian of the plastic arts, poetry, and sculpture, and Dionysus, the god and guardian of music.

Nietzsche continues:

These two different tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births, which perpetuate an antagonism, only superficially reconciled by the common term ‘art’; till eventually, by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic ‘will,’ they appear coupled with each other, and through this coupling ultimately generate an equally Dionysian and Apollinian form of art – Attic tragedy.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Ibid., § 49.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., §49. Cf. §46-50.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., §50, 319.

²⁴⁸ Nietzsche, §1, p. 33, emphasis in original.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., §1, p. 33.

Nietzsche goes on to outline how the art of tragedy emerged out of the dynamic alternation of the Apollinian and Dionysian tendencies.²⁵⁰ This alternation is a form of aesthetic combat in which each force competes for dominance over aesthetic expression.²⁵¹ As a result, each issues a challenge to the other in turn and their contributions become more robust and more in line with the character of the god they serve. This competition can make the ideas in the resulting works more durable and lasting.²⁵²

The Dionysian is associated with intoxication, ecstasy, revelry, the collapse of individuality, and the recollection of the primordial unity of humans.²⁵³ Dionysus, the god of wine, drinking, and revelry, activates this aesthetic force. The Dionysian “celebration of life’s creative cycles, opened the Greeks to the richness of undifferentiated life beyond all established identities.”²⁵⁴ But even though the Dionysian indicates celebration, it is also associated with the revelation of the painful truths of existence such as the wisdom of Silenus.²⁵⁵ The Apollinian, on the other hand, is associated with dreams, illusion, and mere appearance, with “poetic immortalizing, myth, the state, and the agonistic affirmation of the individual [who] provide[s] a measure of

²⁵⁰ This claim can be expanded to all the arts insofar as they are descended from tragedy.

²⁵¹ I will return to this point momentarily in relation to the importance of the *agon* in Greek art and culture.

²⁵² Consider Kant’s statement from §50: “[Taste] introduces clarity and order into a wealth of thought and hence makes the ideas durable, fit for approval that is both lasting and universal, and [hence] fit for being followed by others and fit for an ever advancing culture.”

²⁵³ Nietzsche, §1-2.

²⁵⁴ Giacomo Gambino. “Nietzsche and the Greeks: Identity, Politics, and Tragedy.” *Polity* 28 (4) (Summer 1996): 415-444., p. 416.

²⁵⁵ Nietzsche, §3, p. 42, emphasis in original: “Oh, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is – to die soon.”

permanence against time.”²⁵⁶ As a result, the Apollinian serves as a seduction to life and the extension of the will through the presentation of beautiful appearances.²⁵⁷ We are driven to create art out of these two forces. According to Nietzsche, art is a “protection and remedy” for us; we need art in order to survive and thrive.²⁵⁸ It makes life bearable and worth living. Even from these basic descriptions, the relationship of Nietzsche’s Dionysian and Apollinian forces to Kant’s genius and taste begins to come into focus. At the surface level, the Dionysian has a parallel in genius and the Apollinian in taste. I argue that the Dionysian can be interpreted as that which is wild, natural, and inspired – namely, as genius – while the rigidity of the Apollinian can be interpreted as the rule-boundedness of taste.

However, Nietzsche moves beyond this basic parallelism with Kant to suggest that these forces work in an alternating pattern in which the Dionysian and Apollinian ebb and flow like the tides. The Dionysian may strengthen the advance of its cause, and in turn, the Apollinian will strike back against this surge with ever increasing reinforcements. Nietzsche states, “And so, wherever the Dionysian prevailed, the Apollinian was checked and destroyed. But, on the other hand, it was equally certain that, wherever the first Dionysian onslaught was successfully withstood, the authority and majesty of the Delphic god exhibited itself as more rigid and menacing than ever.”²⁵⁹ Thus, the Dionysian and Apollinian are rival tendencies locked in unending combat. It must be noted that even in their opposition, the Dionysian and Apollinian are necessary to each other and that this conflict is required for the production of art.

²⁵⁶ Gambino, p. 416.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., §3, p. 43.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., §15, pp. 96-98.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., §4, p. 47.

Nietzsche combines the Dionysian and the Apollinian into Hellenic genius even though (or maybe because) their forces are antagonistic and opposed. He states, “[T]he Dionysian and Apollinian, in new births ever following and mutually augmenting one another, controlled the Hellenic genius.”²⁶⁰ For Nietzsche, unlike Kant, the combination of these two forces comprises genius through a mutual antagonism, augmentation, and reconciliation; the dynamic relation of these forces gives rise to ingenious art. Nonetheless, the Nietzschean idea that the Apollinian and Dionysian serve as a system of checks and balances (so that neither can become too powerful) is similar to the Kantian account of wing clipping. Kant distinguishes between genius and taste, but also recognizes both as necessary to the production and reception of art within culture. Taste checks genius by clipping its wings, and in turn genius produces even bolder works of art. It must do so if it is to set the rule to art and thereby push art forward.²⁶¹ Like a call and response, each mounts its offensive and each defends its cause in turn, with intermittent moments of reconciliation. Both genius and taste under this Kantian reading are necessary to the other and to the dynamic process of art making.

Despite the importance of the dynamic relation of the Dionysian and Apollinian forces, Nietzsche ponders stamping out the wildness of the Dionysian. Upon careful consideration, he refuses to do so.²⁶² More precisely, Nietzsche recognizes the impossibility and undesirability of such a course of action. He states:

²⁶⁰ Ibid., §4, p. 47.

²⁶¹ While Kant does not make this point explicit, it follows logically if the future of art is to advance. If taste constantly restricts genius, genius must respond by renegotiating the rules of art and thereby pushing and stretching the boundaries of tradition.

²⁶² Keep this refusal in mind when we get to the option of severing genius’s wings. Despite the presence of this line of argument in *The Birth of Tragedy*, some philosophers and critics go so far as to claim that the unrestrained Apollinian is the true character of Nietzsche’s aesthetics. As Benjamin Bennett states in “Nietzsche’s Idea of Myth: The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Eighteenth Century Aesthetics,”

To separate this original and all-powerful Dionysian element from tragedy, and to reconstruct tragedy purely on the basis of an un-Dionysian art, morality, and world view – this is the tendency of Euripides as it now reveals itself to us in clear illumination. In the evening of his life, Euripides himself propounded to his contemporaries the question of the value and significance of this tendency, using a myth. Is the Dionysian entitled to exist at all? Should it not be forcibly uprooted from Hellenic soil? Certainly, the poet tells us, if it were only possible: but the god Dionysus is too powerful...²⁶³

Although Euripides helps drive Dionysus from the tragic stage, Dionysus has not been vanquished. Instead, through the demonic power of Socrates, Euripides' un-Dionysian art becomes "naturalistic and inartistic."²⁶⁴ Works of drama or art based exclusively on the Dionysian or the Apollinian are, Nietzsche claims, bound to fail, albeit in different ways. The alternation of creative forces is necessary to Hellenic genius, and according to Nietzsche, to the production of art. Interpreted in a Kantian way, this passage suggests that the severing of wings would destroy art. Balance is stressed here – between Dionysus and Apollo or between genius and taste – because both make valuable contributions to art.²⁶⁵

These forces augment each other and force each other into balance. As such, they are necessary to each other. As Benjamin Bennett states in "Nietzsche's Idea of Myth: The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Eighteenth Century Aesthetics":

The Apollonian and the Dionysian are related by 'mutual necessity,' not in the sense that they modify each other, but in the sense that they intensify each other (sich gegenseitig steigernd), so that the whole essence of each may be revealed; and this idea is in turn indispensable in Nietzsche's general argument that Greek

"[Walter] Kaufmann maintains that Nietzsche, if forced to choose, would 'favor' the Apollonian over the Dionysian because the latter, taken by itself, is in essence a 'destructive disease' [...] But there is nothing to justify coming down as firmly on one side of the question as Kaufmann does, or as those critics whom he opposes had done before him." Benjamin Bennett. "Nietzsche's Idea of Myth: The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Eighteenth Century Aesthetics." *PMLA* 94 (3) (May 1979): 420-433, p. 420.

²⁶³ Nietzsche, §12, p. 81.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, §12, p. 83.

²⁶⁵ Uncareful readers of Nietzsche are all too ready to favor Dionysus in this conflict. It is to Nietzsche's credit that he favors neither force and promotes their dynamic relationship and mutual necessity.

tragedy represents ‘the culmination of the Apollonian as well as the Dionysian artistic aims.’ The Apollonian and the Dionysian are not born pure but, rather, *become* pure – they ‘become what they are,’ in a favorite phrase of both Hegel and Nietzsche – through their historical development and interaction.²⁶⁶

Kant and Nietzsche agree on the dynamism of these forces, but as aforementioned, they conceive of their relation to genius differently. Nietzsche stresses the power of both of them: despite its decorous and rigid appearance, then, even the Apollinian has brute strength. Given the proper circumstances, the Apollinian borrows Dionysian tools to execute its own goals. This is an idea I gestured towards in Chapter Two. If taste has the power at its disposal to check genius, it must be (just as) ferocious in the execution of its ends. As Nietzsche states, “The opposition between Apollo and Dionysus became more hazardous and even impossible, when similar impulses finally burst forth from the deepest roots of the Hellenic nature and made a path for themselves: the Delphic god, by a seasonably effected reconciliation, now contented himself with taking the destructive weapons from the hands of his powerful antagonist.”²⁶⁷ Thus, Apollo isn’t just disarming his opponent. He is taking up arms for his own cause against Dionysus with a ferocity befitting the god of war.

B. The Political Dimension of Nietzschean Aesthetics

These considerations about the conflict between the Apollinian and the Dionysian highlight the political dimensions of aesthetics. In “Nietzsche and the Greeks: Identity, Politics, and Tragedy,” Giacomo Gambino states:

This antagonism, however, achieved moments of harmony by establishing provisional ‘alliances,’ ‘treaties of peace,’ and ‘fraternal unions.’ Such fragile moments were the result of the artist’s powers of mediation, of doing justice to

²⁶⁶ Bennett, p. 420, emphasis in original. Bennett references §4 and §24 from the *Birth of Tragedy* here. Also, note that Bennett prefers “Apollonian” to Kaufmann’s “Apollinian.”

²⁶⁷ Nietzsche, §2, p. 39.

conflicting demands in life. That Nietzsche's terminology for such mediation in *Birth* is explicitly 'political' is an indication that not only were such reconciliations between the Dionysian and Apollinian instincts the result of artistic play, but that artistic play was not itself unlike the political judgment needed to negotiate compromises between conflicting principles.²⁶⁸ In this passage, Gambino compares aesthetic and political judgment and claims that their conflicts and compromises are analogous. These reconciliations are crucial to the maintenance of balance between the Dionysian and the Apollinian. The excess of either force degrades both art and politics. Gambino argues:

The political problem as Nietzsche describes it in *Birth* thus stems from two kinds of decay, both of which are associated with the breakdown in the relationship of the Apollinian and Dionysian instincts. An excessive concern with Apollinian restraint leads to 'a consuming chase for worldly power and worldly honor' that requires an increasingly rigid social structure and form of political authority; Sparta and eventually Rome follow this line of development, which seeks to master the Dionysian. On the other hand, unrestrained Dionysianism leads to a disgust with, and ultimately a rejection of, action and worldly affairs [...] The first option, we might say, represents the human attempt to master temporality by means of a civilization that seeks to impose a universal identity of man; the latter, an attempt to escape the burdens of temporality altogether, a 'yearning for the nothing.'²⁶⁹

Without balance, a consuming desire for power and honor on the one hand (a desire to distinguish oneself), and disgust with life and worldly affairs on the other hand (a desire for nothing or nonexistence) results.

In the first case of imbalance, the politically charged conflict produces the excess of the Apollinian. The model of this kind of excess is seen in the rigidity of the Doric state. Nietzsche states:

[W]herever the first Dionysian onslaught was successfully withstood, the authority and majesty of the Delphic god exhibited itself as more rigid and menacing than ever. For me the *Doric* state and Doric art are explicable only as a permanent military encampment of the Apollinian. Only incessant resistance to the titanic-barbaric nature of the Dionysian could account for the long survival of

²⁶⁸ Gambino, p. 439.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 429-430. At the end of this passage, Gambino quotes *The Birth of Tragedy*, §21, p. 124-125.

art so defiantly prim and so encompassed with bulwarks, a training so warlike and rigorous, and a political structure so cruel and relentless.²⁷⁰

In addition to describing Apollinian art or expression in warlike terms, Nietzsche extends his characterization to the realm of the state. He describes the structure of the Doric state as “cruel and relentless,” indicating the intolerable nature of this political situation.²⁷¹

In the second case of imbalance, when the Dionysian goes unrestrained, its unconventional, uncultured, anti-cultural, or wild character dominates. Gambino states, “The Dionysian religious cults provided an alternative to Greek political existence, relating individuals not to the ancestral origins of the city but to the universal community of mankind. While Apollinianism demanded restraint and measure (*Mass*), Dionysianism relished in excess (*Uebermass*) and the uninhibited openness to, and participation in, the diversity of life.”²⁷² Gambino goes on to describe the Dionysian as “anti-political” or as lying outside of politics. In other words, if the Dionysian is completely unrestrained, it is not a welcome part of culture. Nor, presumably, would it welcome culture’s embrace. Gambino states, “The rhythms of Dionysian life represented for the Greeks what J. Peter Euben calls the ‘moment of anti-politics.’ The Dionysian rituals not only relieved the Greeks of the tensions and agony of political life, but reminded them that politics could not absorb the diversity of life.”²⁷³ The inability to absorb the Dionysian energies into the normal functioning of culture (unless in careful balance with the Apollinian) is analogous to what would happen if the wings of genius were not clipped by taste. I will return to this point momentarily.

²⁷⁰ Nietzsche, §4, p. 47, emphasis in original.

²⁷¹ I alluded to this issue in Chapter Two when discussing the vigor of taste in clipping the wild wings of genius.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 427.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 427. Cf. J. Peter Euben. *The Tragedy of Political Theory: The Road Not Taken*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.

In response to these imbalances, Gambino suggests that a more productive way to manage and negotiate the Apollinian and Dionysian energies is to channel them into contests. “The *agon* represented the Greek’s ability to transform such ambitions [such as fame and other distinguishing marks] into *organized* political and cultural competition. It rested on the distinction between *eris* (discord), which leads men into fights of annihilation, and a second kind of *eris*, which is ‘the activity of fights which are *contests*.’”²⁷⁴ Here, Gambino highlights a Nietzschean strategy for overcoming the Apollinian desire to distinguish oneself at all costs. In place of the drive to annihilate, Gambino advances a type of conflict that ends more amicably and productively – that of contests. These, he points out, must rest upon the “mutual respect and honor of opponents.”²⁷⁵ Such a reading of Nietzsche reinforces the above point about keeping the Dionysian tendency within culture. If channeled into contests, the Dionysian may indirectly serve the purposes of culture in spite of itself.

C. Unrestrained Dionysus – Unclipped Genius

Let us now turn to the second case of imbalance – unrestrained Dionysianism – in order to more fully understand the nature and the stakes of this scenario. While at first blush this might appear to be a liberating option for expression, unruly expressions are forced out of culture due to a lack of understanding on the part of the community. Although the notion of unrestrained Dionysianism seems to present the opportunity for creative revelry and freedom of expression, in actuality, its excessive nature constrains it in its own way. Because it is anti-political, the Dionysian cannot find a place within

²⁷⁴ Gambino, p. 424, emphasis in original. The quotation is a reference to “Homer’s Contest” in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1954, p. 35. *Agon* are contests, competitions, or challenges of all kinds in art, culture, and athletics.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

culture unless it is balanced with the Apollinian in the form of art. As such, it must exit the polis because it cannot be comprehended within it. In what follows, I explore the aesthetic implications of this silencing and relocation.

Kant claims that the impetus to liberate genius from all constraint is sophomoric and misguided:

[S]hallow minds believe that the best way to show that they are geniuses in first bloom is by renouncing all rules of academic constraint, believing that they will cut a better figure on the back of an ill-tempered than of a training-horse. Genius can only provide rich *material* for products of fine art; processing this material and giving it *form* requires a talent that is academically trained, so that it may be used in a way that can stand the test of the power of judgment.²⁷⁶

An analysis of Nietzsche shows that he is in accord with Kant on this point, because freeing genius (or freeing Dionysus) does not remove all the limitations presented by its challenging, unrestrained expression. Even if the restrictions do not issue from within taste or culture, ingenious expressions will not be comprehensible within culture. In other words, even if Dionysus is free to do what he pleases, he is still unable to fully express himself because of his anti-cultural tendencies.

Let us return to the Nietzschean discussion of the amphitheater where tragedy occurs. He comments that the spectators “overlook” the action of the tragedy due to the shape and design of the theater. Nietzsche states, “A public of spectators as we know it was unknown to the Greeks: in their theaters the terraced structure of concentric arcs made it possible for everybody to actually *overlook* the whole world of culture around him and to imagine, in absorbed contemplation, that he himself was a chorist.”²⁷⁷ As Walter Kaufmann observes, the term “übersehen” can be translated as both “survey” and

²⁷⁶ Kant, §47, p. 178, 310, emphasis in original.

²⁷⁷ Nietzsche, §8, p. 62-63, emphasis in original.

“ignore.”²⁷⁸ When artists and their works exit the amphitheater, polis, or culture, the “audience” redoubles its capacity to overlook them. It becomes easier to ignore artistic expressions the farther removed they are from the center of culture. Instead of fancying themselves as chorists who are part of the action, the audience of spectators see themselves as the arbiters of culture. By refusing to acknowledge anything that pushes beyond boundaries as speaking to or for them, these protectors of culture prevent the inclusion of anything that could challenge their culture. The ability to ignore artists and works does not usually raise ultimate questions of acceptance or rejection. Even if they are looked on unfavorably, artists and works still remain part of their culture. However, those that exit from culture altogether appear altogether unworthy of cognition and communication. This effectively amounts to silencing through collective disregard.

As I argued in Chapter Two, the ability to communicate about works of genius through judgments of taste is valuable to our social and cultural selves. Even though conversing about works of genius presents difficulties, it is important that we try to communicate about them. Through the process of attempting to express our aesthetic experience to others, we can refine our formulations and hone our communication skills. Thus, struggling to comprehend difficult works of art can help us grapple with and communicate about challenging art in the future. Not only do these conversations serve a vital function with respect to the establishment of taste and culture, but also, and more importantly, they develop our civility and sociability. They train us to recognize social otherness more generally.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., §8, note # 6, p. 63. The acts of overseeing and seeing over have very different connotations and implications. Thus, in translating “übersehen” as “overlook,” Kaufmann preserves this playful and paradoxical wordplay.

The ability to contemplate and communicate about works that exhibit unrestrained Dionysian tendencies would serve similar purposes insofar as they excite the cognitive faculties as well. As we shall see in Chapter Four, communities that form around a shared aesthetic experience that is difficult to communicate about are not located at the center of culture, but instead, form cults or subcultures at the margins. Even if works that reflect unrestrained Dionysianism cannot ultimately change the fate of art – because they are innovative but not exemplary – discussing them impacts our social selves, changes the social sphere, and potentially results in alternative sites of communication. If communication about these artists and works is forced out of culture, other sites and modes of communication may need to be explored. The result of such activity is the formation of cults and subcultures that may not be recognized as speaking in meaningful ways.

D. Needcompany's Dionysian Excess: A Case of Unclipped Wings

In addition to being a play about the dynamics of family and power, at its core, *King Lear* is about (mis)communication and (mis)understanding. It explores the impact of power on personal and political relationships, especially in situations involving misplaced trust and deception. With Needcompany's adaptation, Jan Lauwers delves into these themes by stretching the bounds of comprehensibility even for those who are familiar with the source material. *Needcompany's King Lear*²⁷⁹ uses dialogue in several languages, innovative supertitles, a staged script reading of parts of the play, and a representation of war that verges on out-and-out chaos.²⁸⁰ Needcompany's production

²⁷⁹ Henceforth, *NKL*.

²⁸⁰ See Martha Tuck Rozett. "Needcompany's *King Lear*." (review). *Shakespeare Bulletin* 20 (3) (Summer 2002): 22-23. See also Christel Stalpaert. "Beauty as a Weapon Against the Unbearable Cruelty

multiplies and amplifies the layers of misunderstanding and miscommunication between characters that is already present in Shakespeare's text and then transposes them into the relationship between work and audience. I deal with each sort of miscommunication in turn. Then, I discuss how *NKL* is a work of Dionysian excess, of unclipped genius that lacks taste. Finally, I examine the reasons for Lauwers's refusal to conform or be restrained by theatrical conventions. I conclude by examining the extra-cultural force of Needcompany's production.

1. Language and Miscommunication

In *NKL*, the characters often speak to one another in different languages including Dutch, French, Italian, and English.²⁸¹ These linguistic differences embody distinct perspectives on the world that generate problems in understanding. Most starkly, family members speak but fail to understand one another in spite of their genetic connection. As Lauwers comments, "Shakespeare uses ambiguity as a basic idea: what you see is not what you see, what you hear is not what you hear."²⁸² Sometimes, characters merely miss each other's meaning because of ambiguous speech. But on other occasions, characters deliberately conceal their intentions and attempt to deceive others through the use of multiple languages.

The paradigmatic case of miscommunication in *King Lear* is the lack of understanding between Cordelia and Lear. While her two sisters go to great lengths to flatter their father in hopes of acquiring their inheritance – their share of his kingdom –

of Being in *Needcompany's King Lear*." In *No Beauty for Me There Where Human Life is Rare: On Jan Lauwers' Work With Needcompany*. Trans. Gregory Ball. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press and International Theatre & Film Books, 2007.

²⁸¹ Erika Rundle. "Images of Freedom." *Theater* 33 (1) (2003): 59-71, p. 59.

²⁸² Stalpaert, p. 120

Cordelia says nothing. In an aside after the obsequious speeches of Goneril and Regan, Cordelia says, “my love’s / More ponderous than my tongue.”²⁸³ Cordelia is unable to display the false deference of her sisters, so when she is asked by Lear what she can say to “draw a / Third more opulent than [her] sisters?,” Cordelia says, “Nothing, my lord.”²⁸⁴ Even when the king informs her that “[n]othing will come of nothing,”²⁸⁵ Cordelia refuses to alter her speech to secure her inheritance or avoid Lear’s wrath. Because she loves her father, Cordelia cannot flatter him and instead simply declares that she loves Lear in a way that her sisters do not. In comparison to the operatic overtures of Goneril and Regan, Cordelia’s candid declarations seem meager and disrespectful. Though Cordelia’s is the only true statement of filial piety, Lear is unable to recognize it because of his pride.

In Shakespeare’s play, this miscommunication occurs within a single language. In Needcompany’s production, Lauwers makes it even more explicit by having Cordelia speak to Lear, who only speaks Dutch, in French.²⁸⁶ The linguistic shift makes their distance and lack of community even more palpable. Lear disowns his daughter despite her love and honesty, but Cordelia manages to maintain her love for him in spite of his mistreatment of her. Lear’s misplaced trust in people who are intent on deceiving him in conjunction with his lack of recognition of Cordelia’s filial piety lead to their failure to communicate. Despite their genetic relationship, Lear and Cordelia do not share a common tongue or a common heart. To use Jerome Kohn’s phrase, they do not live in a

²⁸³ William Shakespeare. *King Lear*. Ed. George Ian Duthie and John Dover Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968., Act I, Scene i, ll. 75-76.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Act I, scene i, ll. 85.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Act I, scene i, ll. 88.

²⁸⁶ Rozett, p. 22.

“common world.”²⁸⁷ Indeed, in my recollection of *NKL*, Cordelia is the only character in the production to speak French.²⁸⁸ She shares a language with no one. Lauwers thus distinguishes Cordelia not only from her father and sisters, but from everyone, suggesting the singularity of Cordelia’s moral compass and her unwavering loyalty to Lear.²⁸⁹

Characters in this production misunderstand each other not only due to natural linguistic distance, but sometimes also due to deliberate linguistic distancing. Characters conspire within a language that is not shared by a third party of interest. For instance, Goneril and Albany scheme with each other in English in order to deceive Lear.²⁹⁰ This creates a sense of dramatic irony for an English-speaking audience that is able to listen in on their machinations and easily grasp their betrayal.

In both cases discussed above, the problems of miscommunication are amplified through the lack of a shared language. This is partially a playful meta-commentary on the rampant miscommunication at work throughout *King Lear*. But in *NKL*, multiple languages are also used for practical and artistic reasons. In an interview, Lauwers states, “It’s a bit arrogant, I think, to do Shakespeare in English without being a native speaker. Better to see a good actor perform in his own language than try to find his way in

²⁸⁷ Jerome Kohn. “Kant’s Common World.” *Raritan* 22 (3) (Winter 2003): 102-113.

²⁸⁸ As Bruce Weber notes in his *New York Times* review, “[T]he play is presented in three languages, mostly Dutch and intermittent English, though Cordelia [...] in particular, is partial to French.” I attended an American version of the production at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in November, 2001. Reviews corroborate the fact that Cordelia speaks in French, but I have been unable to find support for the singularity of her language. It is possible that Cordelia and France both speak French, as would be suggested by both their relationship and his name, but I have been unable to find these specific details. See Bruce Weber. “When Shakespeare Could Use a Warning Label.” (theater review) *The New York Times*. 2 November 2001.

²⁸⁹ This is also supported by the expansion of Cordelia’s role in *Needcompany’s King Lear*. As Rozett puts it, “The principal dancers – Cordelia, France, whose long tunic echoes Cordelia’s shift, and Oswald, played by a slight young woman – are onstage most of the time, sometimes sitting quietly at the side of the stage, sometimes running frantically and repetitively back and forth across the acting space, and sometimes dancing solo or in groups. Cordelia is thus a much more prominent presence than in conventional performances of *King Lear*.” See Rozett, p. 23.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

English.”²⁹¹ In addition to these considerations, Lauwers recognizes the effect that the multiplicity of languages will have upon American audiences who, for the most part, will be unfamiliar with them. He takes this as an opportunity to put pressure on conventions and to push audience members out of their comfort zones.²⁹² Bruce Weber’s *New York Times* review recognizes the challenges of the production and even goes so far as to suggest that *NKL* ought to come with a warning: “[T]hose who harbor expectations of any theatrical conventions at all would do well to abandon them before buying a ticket, lest the deconstructionist vision of the director, Jan Lauwers, drive them to the exits prematurely.”²⁹³ As Martha Tuck Rozett notes in her review, many audience members actually left the Brooklyn Academy of Music before the production was over.²⁹⁴

By utilizing supertitles on an LED screen above the stage as would be encountered at an opera in a foreign language, Lauwers redoubles the miscommunication effect occurring among the characters on stage and transposes it into the relationship between the work and the audience. For, instead of translating the multiplicity of foreign languages or clarifying the dialogue by simplifying it, the supertitles preserve Shakespeare’s language to the fullest extent. They present a quickly scrolling line of unaltered Early Modern English. Some reviewers such as Rozett found this use of supertitles objectionable. Her critique focuses on the added obscurity they generated.²⁹⁵ Lauwers explains his use of supertitles both culturally and aesthetically:

With American audiences there’s one dominant language. American English is the language of the Western world. In Belgium, we see foreign films in their

²⁹¹ Rundle, p. 62.

²⁹² This is taken to the next level through the use of supertitles in this production.

²⁹³ Weber, Arts Section.

²⁹⁴ Rozett, p. 23.

²⁹⁵ Rozett, p. 22. This was also evident in the reactions of the audience during the production I attended in 2001.

original language. I learned English by watching American movies subtitled in Dutch. In France and Germany they're dubbed. I'm used to reading subtitles, but Americans aren't. Consequently, it's easier for us to watch theater with subtitles because we are used to it. It's part of our culture. *Needcompany's King Lear* plays with that idea.²⁹⁶

While I concede that Americans as a general rule do not possess as many tongues as do the Belgians,²⁹⁷ explaining away the difficulty presented by the supertitles as a matter of cultural differences is an oversimplification. Even if not all American audiences are used to reading subtitles, there is certainly a portion that is used to this practice.²⁹⁸ However, even those who are used to reading subtitles may not be prepared for Elizabethan supertitles that move quickly. Because of the complexity of Shakespeare's language, it would be difficult to grapple with Shakespeare's text even if it were moving at a slow speed. Some spectators might not be able to follow the supertitles and pay attention to the stage action at the same time. The confusion expressed by audience and critics alike suggests that unsimplified Shakespeare may function as yet another foreign language at play in the work.

Rozett argues:

Needcompany's Lear preserves large chunks of Shakespeare's language but expects the supertitles to do the work of communicating them to the audience. Lines are delivered at a frenetic pace, alternating with long, mostly silent dance interludes. Ironically, too much of the text is left relatively unchanged, so that only a spectator very familiar with the play can follow continuously scrolling lines while watching the actors move around the acting space.²⁹⁹

From Rozett's perspective, what might normally constitute a strength of an adaptation – its faithfulness to the source material – is viewed as a weakness of *Needcompany's*

²⁹⁶ Rundle, p. 63.

²⁹⁷ In an interview with Erika Rundle, Lauwers explains that in Belgium, people have to learn multiple languages out of necessity if they are to be understood outside of their small country. See Rundle, p. 63.

²⁹⁸ Perhaps the audience of the Brooklyn Academy of Music Next Wave series would have experience with subtitles and supertitles.

²⁹⁹ Rozett, p. 22.

production. In part, this is because she interprets the role of the supertitles to be solely communicative. As Rozett frames the point, Lauwers “expects the supertitles to do the work of communicating [large chunks of Shakespeare] to the audience.” If the supertitles summarized the action or translated it for ease of understanding, then their *merely* communicative role would be clear. I agree that the supertitles are doing some heavy lifting in this production, but not *merely* on the side of communication. Rather, the supertitles in Needcompany’s production play a dual (and self-contradictory) role. While there is certainly a communicative dimension to the information conveyed via the LED screen, their excessiveness also inhibits the audience’s ability to grasp it and the action taking place on stage simultaneously. Put more directly, the supertitles are both a vehicle for communication (enriching it) and against communication (obscuring it). The supertitles “translate” the multiplicity of languages in use back into the Shakespearean original, but this does nothing to simplify the linguistic challenges posed by the production. In fact, the excess presented makes our comprehension even more difficult. But this is part of the point. The sheer excess of information obscures communication in this case. Lauwers takes the thematic issue of miscommunication present in *King Lear* and transposes it from a problem among characters to one between the work and the audience.

Lauwers’s peculiar use of supertitles is a provocation; it calls the audience to become actively engaged with the play and to explore meaning in a new way. As Christel Stalpaert states, “In *NKL*, Lauwers triggers the audience to question the value of knowledge and ‘common sense’ in order to think creatively.”³⁰⁰ While the difficulties

³⁰⁰ Stalpaert, p. 120.

and excesses in language in *NKL* are meant to confuse, they are also intended to spur the audience to respond creatively and to communicate their judgments of taste to one another. Just as Lauwers takes the performance of the play to be a creative endeavor – one about invention rather than memorization and enactment on the part of the actors – so too, he treats reception as a site of creativity and engagement.³⁰¹ He uses the difficulty, complexity, and excessiveness of the production as an invitation to the audience to actively participate and engage with the material and each other.³⁰²

At times the excessiveness of *NKL* serves the purposes of communication as well. Lauwers uses supertitles to indicate lines that remain unspoken on stage or that cannot be heard over the din of the action. As Marvin Carlson recalls of the beginning of the play:

[T]he actor playing Gloucester sits downstage in a comfortable chair (as he does throughout the first four acts). Kent stands beside him, but neither of them speaks their opening lines. Instead they, like the audience, watch these opening lines which appear only as supertitles (complete with the character attribution of each line) above their heads. To these projected lines they react with nudges and gestures. Thus, from the opening moments, supertitles are established as a channel of communication separate from the voices of the actors...³⁰³

Carlson distinguishes between the meanings conveyed by the actors and by the supertitles to show how the supertitles supplement, or even comment upon, the action on stage. One might even say that this knowing or reflexive use of supertitles constitutes an additional level of communication altogether.

³⁰¹ Rundle, p. 64, p. 66-67. As Lauwers puts it, “It’s not about perfection, it’s about invention. As a performer, you have to produce every moment.”

³⁰² Katrien Vuylsteke Vanfeleteren. “‘Art is Always Politics’: A Lacanian Reading of Lauwers’ Newsletters.” In *No Beauty for Me There Where Human Life Is Rare: On Jan Lauwers’ Theatre Work with Needcompany*. Christel Stalpaert, Frederik Le Roy, and Sigrid Bousset, eds. Trans. Gregory Ball. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press and International Theatre & Film Books, p. 354.

³⁰³ Marvin Carlson. “*Needcompany’s King Lear* and the Semiotics of Supertitles.” In *No Beauty for Me There Where Human Life Is Rare: On Jan Lauwers’ Theatre Work with Needcompany*. Christel Stalpaert, Frederik Le Roy, and Sigrid Bousset, eds. Trans. Brigitte Auer. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press and International Theatre & Film Books, p. 198.

Lauwers expands upon this aspect of supertitling by distinguishing between spoken word and written text, or what he refers to as word as *image*. In an exchange with Rundle about the “material approach to language in *Lear*,”³⁰⁴ Lauwers says:

When *Lear* says ‘kill,’ and then you read the word *kill* on the LED screen, they are totally different phenomena. The word *kill* suddenly becomes an image. In Belgium, we performed the play in Dutch, but we also put the Dutch translation on the LED screen, so you achieve that double effect. I couldn’t do this in the States because it was too difficult for us to learn the play in English.³⁰⁵

While there is a doubling at play between the dialogue and supertitles in the American production, it is different from the one in the Dutch production. So is its effect.

Linguistic differences aside, both versions of *NKL* show how miscommunication calls attention to language in different ways – as spoken word to be heard, textual word to be read, or an image to be seen. Lauwers plays off the relationship among words, acts, and images as a series of confluences, collisions, and conflicts to explore how language eludes or exceeds us. He investigates how language falls short of capturing excessive experience, even when language itself becomes profuse. If one follows Lauwers’s sense of language as image, one can interpret the text of supertitles as the representation – the sign – of the excess that we cannot fully capture or comprehend.

2. Reception of *Needcompany’s King Lear*: Unrestrained Dionysianism / Unclipped Genius

The excessiveness of language in *NKL* causes difficulties in reception. According to Stalpaert, “Lauwers [...] uses what Erwin Jans calls a deliberate excess of language, something that explodes in an indefinable amalgam of sounds: ‘it seems as if language is

³⁰⁴ Rundle, p. 62.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62, emphasis in original.

constantly pushed to the limits...language somehow becomes ‘disbanded.’³⁰⁶ The excess of sounds from various sources makes it difficult to distinguish them from one another and to comprehend the aural and visual information conveyed via the supertitles simultaneously. Jans expands upon this point:

Language has always been a problematic means of communication in Lauwers’ plays. Bound up with power and desire, language is both a deficiency and an excess. The plays abound in people speaking in several languages at once, in translations from one language to another, and in actors who are constantly interrupting one another, often with shouts. Language seems always to be running up against its own limits.³⁰⁷

We may interpret the excessiveness of *NKL* in several ways, two of which are particularly relevant to its reception as a controversial work that is difficult to comprehend. On the one hand, the excessiveness of *NKL* may be viewed as Dionysian without the balance of its Apollinian counterpart. On the other hand, it may be viewed as a work of genius without taste. The similarity of the Nietzschean and Kantian readings has already been discussed in the first part of this chapter. Under each interpretation, I argue that a large portion of the audience was silenced by the work and did not try to work through its responses in community with others, but instead left the production before it was over. I will detail each in turn and then discuss the relation between Lauwers’s resistance to limitation or restriction and the reception of *NKL*.

The Nietzschean interpretation of *NKL* as excessive Dionysianism is bolstered by the lack of Apollinian order, decorum, restraint, or lucidity.³⁰⁸ In the previous section, I

³⁰⁶ Stalpaert, p. 123. In this excerpt, Stalpaert quotes an article by Erwin Jans. “Restless Search in the Interspaces: Observation in the Work of Jan Lauwers.” *Carnet: Performing Arts in the Netherlands and Flanders*. 14 (June 1997): p. 2.

³⁰⁷ Erwin Jans. “A Broken Community: On Needcompany.” In *No Beauty for Me There Where Human Life Is Rare: On Jan Lauwers’ Work With Needcompany*. Trans. Gregory Ball. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press and International Theatre & Film Books, 2007.

³⁰⁸ Nietzsche, §1, §2, §9.

focused on problems in understanding based upon the saturation of supertitles. The chaos of Act V manifests excess through disorder and unruliness. This in turn affects communication and comprehension both onstage and off. Stalpaert recalls the scene in this way:

In Act V the storm scene and the final section coalesce into a chaotic, hallucinatory assault on the spectator's senses. There is no doubt about the condensation or saturation of signs here [...] The auditory component bursts at the seams. The actors who have no lines to speak wage war; they blow the sound of gun shots into the microphone, shriek chilling cries expressive of the fear of death, and produce an amalgam of sounds that pierce the audience to the marrow. The actors who are speaking their lines do not use a microphone. They try to raise their voices over the hail of auditory bullets, over the chaos and sensory violence. They reel off their lines fast and in a flurry, as if driven on by the saturated stage. In the end even the supertitling goes into overdrive. The spectator's experience is one of disorientation. The solid narrative ground slips away from beneath our feet. We no longer know what to think or in what direction our thoughts should go.³⁰⁹

With so much to look at, it is difficult for the audience to select a focal point among the multiple centers vying for their attention.³¹⁰ In addition to overloading the spectator's senses, the chaotic and hallucinatory scene impedes thought. This situation parallels the Dionysian cultic ritual in which comprehensibility falls by the wayside and the spectator must give in to the experience without being able to gain any distance from it.³¹¹ Apollinian reason and order seem to be completely absent from the production at this point. This strains the spectator's ability to comprehend the work – a point that is corroborated by numerous negative and dismissive reviews.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Stalpaert, p. 122-123.

³¹⁰ Rundle, p. 65.

³¹¹ This is indicated by Nietzsche's description of the Dionysian as ecstatic, intoxicated, and trying to throw down barriers and "impudent conventions." See §1.

³¹² I want to pause here to note that some critical articles were more favorable towards the production. These authors could be interpreted as a cult audience for whom complete comprehensibility is not the leading value. Chaos and mystery are more tolerable for such individuals if the work is sufficiently thought provoking or intriguing. Naturally, this is a smaller group who finds something compelling about the production and seeks to understand it together with others. So, in spite of the anti-communicative aspects

Lauwers seems to deliberately push comprehensibility to its limits in *NKL*. While he surely seeks an audience, Lauwers seems uninterested in its size. He certainly does not want a large audience if it means he must restrict his vision.³¹³ This leads to the Kantian interpretation of him as a genius who refuses the restrictions of taste or convention. While Lauwers may be attempting to “set the rule to art” through his boundary pushing, without taste to temper his productions, the ideas will not be comprehensible to audience members.³¹⁴ The lack of restrictions does not lead to increasingly interesting and innovative contributions to art and culture, but to stresses on comprehensibility. As Kant frames the point, genius needs taste to make its ideas universal, lasting, and fit for an ever-advancing culture.³¹⁵ Instead, because *NKL* is an unrestricted and unbalanced production, it falls outside of culture. This point also relates back to the Nietzschean notion of culture overlooking the incomprehensible. In this case, Lauwers’ resistance to restriction pushes the spectator out of the theater through aggressive disregard for her reception.

Some might interpret the layers of obfuscation in *NKL* as a willful rejection of the audience; the complexity and obscurity could be viewed as an attempt to block understanding of the work in a deliberate fashion. Rozett expresses a version of this scornful interpretation at the end of her review of the production: “A two-and-a-half hour *King Lear* with no intermission and long, silent interludes can test the endurance of even BAM’s sophisticated ‘New Wave Series’ audience members, many of whom left before the play ended [...] Lauwers’ ‘performance work’ fails to make a coherent statement

of such productions, cults can form around works of art that do not have a wide appeal – or that do not seem to invite community building at all. I will expand upon this issue in greater detail in Chapter Four.

³¹³ Rundle, p. 71 and Vanfleteren, p. 354.

³¹⁴ Kant, §46-§50.

³¹⁵ Kant, §50.

about the text it appropriates.”³¹⁶ Rozett somewhat snarkily suggests that if sophisticated New York audiences don’t understand the production and walk out midway through it, then the production is “incoherent” or nonsensical. She concludes that the evidence that the work does not “work,” is the audience’s reaction to it. Put differently, Rozett takes the New York audience to be the arbiters of normative taste.

Lauwers is more interested, however, in reexamining and subverting conventions than in obeying them. As such, we might say he is trying to set the new rule to art, as would a Kantian genius. In this case, Lauwers’s work is not tempered by taste; its wings are not clipped. He refuses restrictions that would make the production more accessible to and comprehensible by the audience. One explanation for this resistance to convention and restriction is his investment in the preservation of artistic freedom. He is wary about regulations or restrictions that stem from cultural or conventional sources, especially if they are connected to governmental purse strings.³¹⁷

I wanted to preserve my freedom. I thought funding was a trap. By the time I received my first government support I had already been working in theater for eight years. And then I received funding, but not a lot [...] I’m proud that I used that system, but what I’m most proud of after twenty-five years of being an artist is that I haven’t been recuperated into the mainstream. They didn’t *get me*. I’m still on the fringe. Yes, I play at the fantastic Harvey Theater at BAM, and I play at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, but I’m not an official star director. Normally, at forty-five, you do big operatic productions [...] But I still have a very small company and we’re still doing our own thing. I want to keep my own freedom. I never want to become a businessman.³¹⁸

Not only does Lauwers view his fringe status as a badge of honor, but also as a guarantor of his freedom as an artist. In Lauwers’s mind, as long as he remains an outsider, he will

³¹⁶ Rozett, p. 23.

³¹⁷ See Clement Greenberg’s “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” for an in depth analysis of the relationship of the avant-garde to culture and commerce.

³¹⁸ Rundle, p. 71, emphasis in original.

not be compelled to conform to the tastes of culture or government.³¹⁹ Therefore, he will be able to produce art as he conceives of it and in his own way, unconventional though it may be. As Lauwers puts it, “Art is not a form of leisure activity but a form of freedom [...] Freedom is a notion that inspires us with increasing fear. And that should not be the case.”³²⁰ Lauwers refuses restrictions that would compromise his vision of a production in order to preserve his freedom as an artist.

The lack of conformity to accepted rules of taste is especially important in deciphering the reception of *NKL*. Most audience members didn’t fully articulate what bothered them about the production, namely, its excessiveness, its indulgence, and its lack of taste. To return to Weber’s formulation, audience members ought to abandon all hope for theatrical conventions at this production. Audience expectations were thwarted by the excessiveness of *NKL*.³²¹ So, while taste isn’t actively restricting Lauwers’s works by clipping their wings, his expression in *NKL* is equally as limited because it is equally incomprehensible within culture. While works of unrestrained genius are free, they are not, strictly speaking, free to be part of culture. A lack of wing clipping serves as its own form of restriction.

³¹⁹ In the introduction to *No Beauty for Me There Where Human Life is Rare*, the editors refer to Jan Lauwers as the “pre-eminent outsider.” See p. 25.

³²⁰ Jan Lauwers, September 2002 *Needcompany Newsletter*. Katrien Vuylsteke Vanfleteren quotes this in her article “Art is Always Politics,” p. 354.

³²¹ Stalpaert, p. 123.

III.

The Avant-Garde as Moderate Wing Clipping: Bürger and Duchamp

A. Introduction

As seen in section II, a lack of wing clipping did not produce the liberating effects one might have anticipated. Instead of being restrained by the force of taste, genius's tendency to produce innovative nonsense limits it in its own way. There is, however, a second way to interpret Kant's notion of taste clipping the wings of genius: moderately. In order to examine the notion of moderate wing clipping, I will turn to the reception and treatment of the modernist avant-garde. Like Lauwers, the artists of this movement presented works and ideas that challenged conventions of medium and style. From Dada and Surrealism to the Lettrists and Situationists and on to more contemporary examples, the avant-garde has historically pushed the boundaries of comprehensibility and expanded them in the process. But this expansion and inclusion should not be taken for granted. In fact, some of these groups and styles were extremely controversial at the time of their emergence; the history of their reception includes moments of marginalization by culture. These, I shall argue, are instances of moderate wing clipping.

In the next two sections, I aim to show how the challenge to comprehension that *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* and *Fountain* posed is essential to the expansion of the artworld that these works made possible. Avant-garde artworks, as part of the leading edge of expression, communicate something different than what came before them and demand that we find a way to understand and respond to them. Fulfilling this demand requires that we engage with one another even if such conversations are difficult. This expansion of expression – in both art and language – is in jeopardy if such works are

marginalized. Their exclusion, if even for a short period of time, threatens the expansion of our expressive abilities and thereby silences us.

With these thoughts in mind, let us turn to the avant-garde as a target for moderate wing clipping. In the sections that follow, I trace out the avant-garde goals of integration of art into the praxis of life, the reconceptualization of the “work” of art, the availability of past styles as “material,” and the recontextualization of fragments into new contexts, themes drawn from considering the critical work of Peter Bürger and the art of Marcel Duchamp. While Bürger ultimately treats these innovations as negative developments that jeopardize the unity and integrity of the work of art and lead to the failure of the avant-garde, I argue that his argumentation reveals a theoretical wing clipping that mirrors the exclusions that Duchamp endured in the artworld. In particular, Bürger and I differ in terms of whether the avant-garde achieved the goal of integrating art into the praxis of life. Bürger marks this as a failure of the movement because art as institution is neatly separated off from life for him. He thereby misses the potential for boundary pushing that occurs along the edges of art and life that is of particular interest to my investigation. The very act of fragmentation that Bürger objects to provides an opportunity for the reorganization of the relationship of art and life. In section IV, I examine how Duchamp’s work, particularly his readymades, expanded the conception of the work of art, transformed art making, and reorganized the relationship of art and life, thereby altering the trajectory of art in significant ways.

B. Bürger’s Avant-Garde

The avant-garde is the advance guard or leading edge of expression. It presses the current boundaries of thought and communication in the artworld and pushes them

forward. Through the transformation of old modes or the addition of new modes of expression, avant-garde art challenges the status quo of aesthetic expression. This innovation produces art that allows us to see or hear differently from how we did before. According to Bürger in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, this movement held the potential for radical change both aesthetically and politically. In fact, the integration of art into the praxis of life was often articulated as an explicit goal of the movement. According to Bürger, this goal was never fully actualized. As a result, in this respect he classifies the avant-garde as a “failure.”³²² In section IV below, I explicitly address this claim in relation to the life and work of Marcel Duchamp.

Bürger’s account of this movement becomes more complex when he explores the effect that the avant-garde had upon the notion of the “work of art.” He states, “Although the political intentions of the avant-garde movements (reorganization of the praxis of life through art) were never realized, their impact in the realm of art can hardly be overestimated. Here the avant-garde does indeed have a revolutionary effect, especially because it destroys the traditional concept of the organic work of art and replaces it with another...”³²³ Avant-garde works, manifestations, and happenings reoriented and altered the relationship of art and spectator in significant ways – particularly by opening up the conception of art to more possibilities. In *Marcel Duchamp: Critical Lives*, Caroline Cros claims that Duchamp’s art exemplifies the revolutionary reinterpretation of the work that had the potential to reorient such relationships.³²⁴ Elsewhere in this work, Cros

³²² See Peter Bürger. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1974., p. 57.

³²³ Ibid., p. 59.

³²⁴ Caroline Cros. *Marcel Duchamp: Critical Lives*. Trans. Vivian Rehberg. London, UK: Reaktion Books, Ltd., 2006, p. 57.

refers to the readymade as a “revolution in thought.”³²⁵ Although Bürger recognizes the revolutionary effect of the avant-garde in this epistemological sense, he simultaneously argues that the movement failed to achieve its political goals in practice.

According to Bürger, the radical goals of integrating art into the praxis of life and problematizing the work-status of art meant that avant-garde art was met by “shock” in its audience. The defamiliarization and recombination of materials and techniques altered the relationship between audience and work.³²⁶ Avant-garde artists reconsidered the relationships of elements within the work and produced new audience reactions.³²⁷ As I will go on to argue in section IV in accord with Cros, Duchamp’s challenging explorations of medium and alternative exhibition practices defamiliarized the aesthetic experience for many; these subversive explorations played a role in the troublesome reception and exclusion of some of his works. Arguably, these avant-garde innovations led to their wing clipping for the sake of culture, an idea that even Bürger would agree with.

The repositioning or recombination of materials undertaken by the avant-garde was made possible by access to all the historical styles and means of production. According to Bürger, these styles and modes of expression became the material for reexamining or rethinking expression: “For it is in the historical avant-garde movements that the totality of artistic means becomes available as means. Up to this period in the development of art, the use of artistic means had been limited by the period style, an

³²⁵ I will return to this point in section IV.

³²⁶ As we shall see in the next section of argument, Duchamp’s questions about medium and alternative exhibition practices defamiliarized the aesthetic experience for many.

³²⁷ Bürger comments that shock and defamiliarization are connected to one another in the historical avant-garde. As Bürger states, “What is claimed is no more than a connection – though a necessary one – between the principle of shock in avant-gardiste art and the recognition that defamiliarization is a category of general validity.” (p. 18)

already existing canon of permissible procedures, an infringement of which was acceptable only within certain bounds.”³²⁸ Bürger characterizes the avant-gardes as being able to utilize *all* materials and styles that had been set forth historically. As Arthur Danto puts the point in “Three Decades After the End of Art,” “No art is any longer historically mandated as against any other art. Nothing is any more true as art than anything else.”³²⁹ Styles are combined, juxtaposed in collage or montage, or played off against each other to create something new. The traditional boundaries of style and technique are thwarted, thrown aside, or demolished altogether. This is one source of the shock effect Bürger associates with avant-garde art. Duchamp chose and combined a variety of materials and everyday objects in his collage and readymade projects. The same shock effect that Bürger refers to above may account for the controversies surrounding Duchamp’s innovative projects. With his readymades, the artist was challenging traditional style and technique and making a new kind of art that obeyed new rules of expression.

Bürger goes on to claim that avant-garde art has no style of its own. Instead, its style is constituted by the challenge it poses to the historical tradition and the concept of the work of art. Bürger states, “It is [...] a distinguishing feature of the historical avant-garde movements that they did not develop a style. What did happen is that these movements liquidated the possibility of a period style when they raised to a principle the availability of the artistic means of past periods. Not until there is universal availability

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

³²⁹ Arthur Danto. “Three Decades After the End of Art.” *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997., p. 27.

does the category of artistic means become a general one.”³³⁰ The universal availability of material allows for the exploration and combination of a multiplicity of styles, but for Bürger this pluralistic approach cannot solidify into a style of its own.³³¹ Instead, he claims that the avant-garde is characterized by the treatment of past styles as material, or as “dead fragments,” and by the shock effect that is produced by the combination or juxtaposition of unlike styles. Even if the avant-garde is not characterized by a single style, the innovative use of material and the exploration of new modes of art making unites the various artists and works under this heading.

Bürger’s argument echoes the Hegelian notion of the “end of art.” In his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel claims that “art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place.”³³² Bürger’s discussion of using dead fragments as the material for new art as well as for art’s increasingly conceptual direction is in line with this Hegelian argument. This accords with the ascending movement of spirit from religion to art to philosophy. When art no longer serves its highest purpose, we must turn

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 18-19. With greater distance, today we can claim that Surrealism is very much a style of its own, even as it is related to other movements of its day. But at the time of Bürger’s writing, it may have been too difficult to distinguish from other styles properly. In this sense, some of Bürger’s claims may be historically contingent. See Matthew Gale. *Dada & Surrealism*. London, UK: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1997.

³³¹ In other essays, Danto relates the impact of the end of art to aesthetic pluralism. In “The End of Art” he states, “As Marx might say, you can be an abstractionist in the morning, a photorealist in the afternoon, a minimal minimalist in the evening. Or you can cut out paper dolls or do what you damned please. The age of pluralism is upon us. It does not matter any longer what you do, which is what pluralism means. When one direction is as good as another direction, there is no concept of direction any longer to apply.” See Arthur Danto. “The End of Art.” *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986., p. 114-115. Warhol makes a similar point in an interview about Pop art for *Art News*: “How can you say any style is better than another? You ought to be able to be an Abstract Expressionist next week, or a Pop artist, or a realist, without feeling that you have given up something.” See G. R. Swenson. “What Is Pop Art?: Answers from 8 Painters, Part I.” *Art News* 64 (November 1963): 26. See also Danto. “Three Decades After the End of Art.” p. 37.

³³² G. W. F. Hegel. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Trans. T. M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975., p. 11.

to the philosophy of art for greater understanding and self-consciousness. As Hegel puts the point in the same passage, “The *philosophy* of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is.”³³³ Many avant-garde artists posed the question, “what is art?” rather explicitly, including Duchamp. He reconceptualized the work of art by exploring new modes of art making and new avenues of exhibition, as we shall see in the next section of argument. For Bürger, such questioning and exploration isn’t the only subversive aspect of the avant-garde. In the next section of argument I turn to the notion of fragmentation in order to explore its impact upon the unity of the work of art.

C. “Dead” Fragments and the Limits of Work: A Critique of Bürger’s Theoretical Wing Clipping

Bürger asserts that the avant-garde as a movement served to problematize the notion of the work of art by subverting its traditional conception (“defined as a unity of the universal and the particular”³³⁴) and thereby expanding the category itself. Some examples of the avant-garde challenge to the “work” include Dadaist manifestations and Marcel Duchamp’s readymades; the former often utilized shock tactics or chance in order to challenge preconceived notions of art, while the latter engaged the category of “work of art” in a theoretical manner and thus called settled notions of work and medium into question. In the case of *Fountain*, Duchamp questioned notions of originality, genius, medium, taste, and the role of institution in the artworld. Along the way, these controversial avant-garde works also encountered resistance, marginalization, or

³³³ Ibid., p. 11, emphasis in original.

³³⁴ Bürger, p. 56.

ensorship – what I have been referring to as “wing clipping” throughout this chapter. Specifically, Bürger’s treatment of nonorganic art’s challenge to and expansion of the conception of the work shows moderate wing clipping in action. While Bürger recognizes the way in which avant-gardes enrich, broaden, challenge, and subvert the category of the work of art, he still maintains a relatively narrow conception of the work, as did some critics and audiences in response to these movements.

As a dialectical starting point, Bürger begins with a sense of organic art that relies upon the concept of work and the unity intrinsic to it. He argues that an organic work requires an unmediated relationship of parts to whole.³³⁵ The nonorganic work, by contrast, is marked by the mediation of that unity. The organic work “intends the impression of wholeness”³³⁶ and life, while the nonorganic work has no cohesive unity of parts to whole or interdependency of its parts. Instead, the nonorganic work “proclaims itself an artificial construct, an artifact” made up of fragments selected by the artist.³³⁷ Insofar as Bürger holds fast to the organic / nonorganic distinction, favoring the traditional notion of the unified work, he devalues contributions of the avant-gardes that utilize fragmentation as a way to rethink the notion of the work of art.

As aforementioned, the organic work is characterized by unity of parts to whole and the appearance of life in the production. Works of montage or collage, however, have a different approach to unity that is imparted by the artist. For Bürger, this requires selecting and “killing of the life” of the reality fragments that will compose the work. I argue that Bürger draws this negative conclusion prematurely. With it, he clips

³³⁵ Bürger, p. 56.

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 72-73.

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 72.

nonorganic works' wings in order to preserve tradition and current taste rather than for an explicitly well-considered aesthetic reason such as a defect in form, content, or execution. Fragmentation and recombination do not require "killing" material in order to use it in new ways. Rather, the life of the material is essential to the reconsideration of the work of art that Bürger himself recognizes as crucial to avant-garde movements. I will return to this point momentarily.

Bürger goes on to develop his own more sophisticated notions of the organic and nonorganic work of art via an examination and critique of Adorno's notion of the "new" in *Aesthetic Theory*; considerations about Dada and chance; a discussion of montage; and especially, the investigation of Benjamin's concept of allegory.³³⁸ Bürger's reliance upon Benjamin's notion of allegory critically informs the development of his own organic / nonorganic distinction. While Benjamin's concept of allegory refers to Baroque art, Bürger points out that "[perhaps] it is only in the avant-gardiste work that it finds its adequate object. Differently formulated, we may say that it was Benjamin's experience in dealing with works of the avant-garde that made possible both the development of the category and its application to the Baroque, and not the other way around."³³⁹ In this way, Bürger draws together Benjamin's notion of allegory and his own notion of the avant-garde nonorganic work of art. Based on the supposition that the creation of an allegory and of a nonorganic work of art require the act of fragmentation and reconstitution, Bürger claims that both sorts of art are composite. Moreover, in each case, the "posited meaning [...] does not derive from the original context of the fragments;"³⁴⁰ it stems from

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 59-82.

³³⁹ Ibid., p. 68.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

the act of the allegorist or artist in question. Bürger utilizes Benjamin's language of isolation and deprivation when referring to the fragment and it is precisely at this point that Bürger's account becomes problematic.³⁴¹

The language of violence, deprivation, and isolation suggest that Bürger does not view fragmentation as a means of art making in a fully positive light. Whereas the organic artist treats material as a whole in order to create a unified work of art, the avant-gardiste begins by destroying unity through fragmentation, according to Bürger. Moreover, because his notion of fragmentation implies "killing the life" of material, the avant-gardiste first destroys unity and life and then proceeds to reimpose a kind of unity through the recombination of fragments.³⁴² He states:

Artists who produce an organic work (in what follows, we shall refer to them as 'classicists' without meaning to introduce a specific concept of what the classical work may be) treat their material as something living. They respect its significance as something that has grown from concrete life situations. For avant-gardistes, on the other hand, material is just that, material. Their activity initially consists in nothing other than in killing the 'life' of the material, that is, in tearing it out of its functional context that gives it meaning. Whereas the classicist recognizes and respects in the material the carrier of meaning, the avant-gardiste sees only the empty sign, to which only they can impart significance. The classicist correspondingly treats the material as a whole, whereas the avant-gardiste tears it out of the life totality, isolates it, and turns it into a fragment.³⁴³

Following Benjamin, Bürger claims that a work composed holistically – where the parts "hang together" in an integral way – is organic. A work constructed from isolate fragments torn from their original contexts and then combined with other fragments lacks this unity and is therefore nonorganic. The fragments are divorced from their former function, context, and life, and for Bürger, this means the composite lacks an

³⁴¹ Walter Benjamin. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. New York: Verso Books, 1998. In particular, the essay "Allegory and Trauerspiel" (p. 159-235) is essential here.

³⁴² Bürger, p. 70.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

interdependency of parts to whole. He argues that the “organic work of art is constructed according to the syntagmatic pattern; individual parts and the whole form a dialectical unity [...] the parts can be understood through the whole, the whole only through the parts.”³⁴⁴ The nonorganic work, he asserts, rejects this relationship and therefore, its “parts lack necessity.”³⁴⁵ In the above passage,³⁴⁶ Bürger’s language suggests that the organic artist respects her material as the carrier of meaning and treats it with care. The nonorganic artist savagely rips and rearranges it as *merely* lifeless material to be modified for her own purposes. Bürger’s notion of the nonorganic work is subject to criticism because the act of fragmentation does not necessitate the sense of isolation, deprivation, violence, or coldness that he receives from Benjamin.

What is particularly compelling and insightful about Bürger’s account is his emphasis on the idea of the original “functional context” in relation to fragmentation in nonorganic art. In order to thoroughly examine or understand a work of art comprised (even if only partially) from fragments, it is crucial to recognize the fact that such fragments *have* an original functional context from which they derive meaning. Arguably, it is the separation of the fragment from its original functional context that is the source of the “shock effect” Bürger associates with avant-garde art. But this means that tearing the fragment from its original context may not actually kill its life.³⁴⁷ I will return to this point momentarily.

Bürger presents the activity of the avant-garde artist in stark and even somewhat vicious terms. According to Bürger, the artist views material as that which can be taken

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

³⁴⁷ Arguably, a version of this occurred when Duchamp took everyday objects and changed them into works of art, in part through a change of context.

up, manipulated, and given new meaning through the process of fragmentation and recontextualization. As aforementioned, he refers to this activity as “nothing other than killing the ‘life’ of the material, that is, in tearing it out of its functional context that gives it meaning”³⁴⁸ and in the reinscription of a new meaning by the creative activity of the artist in question. As he puts it, “the avant-gardistes see only the empty sign, to which only they can impart significance.”³⁴⁹ In other words, the artist strips the fragment of its significance and gives it a new context and a new meaning. While tearing fragments out of their original functional context and the act of imparting new meaning in a different context makes sense, it is unclear whether such acts “kill the life” of the material, or whether the life of the material can ever be fully “killed.” If the avant-gardiste work aims at shock and disruption, as Bürger suggests, it is important to consider how such shock generated and whether it has something to do with the life of fragments that have been recontextualized.

If the repositioning of fragments gives rise to shock due to friction between the old meaning (material in its original functional context) and the new meaning (that material as transplanted into another context, and thereby given new meaning by the artist), then the life of the fragment has not been killed. Alternatively, shock could arise from the relationship of fragments to one another within the work. In either case, it seems that the fragment must maintain a modicum of its original meaning if such reactions occur. While fragmentation and recontextualization is by no means the *only* source of shock in avant-garde art, it is a potential source of such reactions. As such, an

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 70.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 70.

inner tension exists in Bürger's account if he insists upon the (wholesale) death of the fragment.

Moreover, regarding fragmentation in cubist collage, Bürger states, "the reality fragments remain largely subordinate to the aesthetic composition, which seeks to create a balance of individual elements (volume, colors, etc.)."³⁵⁰ The subordinate status of the fragments stems from the assumed goal of creating a unified whole in the work of art. However, according to Bürger's definitions, if avant-garde artists deliberately utilized "reality fragments," their works could not meet this goal of natural seeming unity. He states, "The insertion of reality fragments into the work of art fundamentally transforms that work. The artist not only renounces shaping a whole, but gives the painting a different status, since parts of it no longer have the relationship to reality characteristic of the work of art. They are no longer signs pointing to reality, they *are* reality."³⁵¹ In other words, the nonorganic work is composed, in part, from pieces of undigested reality. Thus, such paintings cannot *represent* reality because they *contain* reality. This could be another reason for Bürger's resistance to the nonorganic work of art. As shown above, when composed of reality fragments, he has difficulty considering the nonorganic work to be fully distinct from reality. As such, Bürger also has difficulty considering it to be art.

His negative treatment of the nonorganic work and fragmentation suggests a kind of theoretical wing clipping. Due to the nonorganic work's undigested reality fragments, these parts of the work are subordinate to the aesthetic composition.³⁵² For Bürger, this

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 73.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 78, emphasis in original.

³⁵² Ibid., p. 73.

means the nonorganic work has no coherent unity. The intermixture of reality fragments within a painting challenges the category of art, but such works do not themselves have work character for Bürger.³⁵³ Instead, he considers them to be “manifestations”: “This is not to imply that the avant-gardistes produced no works whatever and replaced them by ephemeral events. We will see that whereas they did not destroy it, the avant-gardistes profoundly modified the category of the work of art.”³⁵⁴ Bürger argues that avant-garde artists altered and expanded the category of work by producing works that were not themselves works of art.

We might consider how Bürger’s treatment of nonorganic art relates to the rejection of *Fountain* from the Society of Independent Artists show. As a result of marginalization, Duchamp sought out alternative modes of exhibition for his readymades as we shall see in the next section of argument. Arguably, Bürger would treat readymades as nonorganic, or perhaps, as not works of art at all because of their status as reality fragments. This treatment constitutes a form of theoretical wing clipping. As we shall see in the next section, some audiences reacted to Duchamp’s readymades in the same way – either overlooking them or rejecting them.

D. Conclusion

To summarize, I have argued here that Bürger’s account of the avant-garde performs a theoretical wing clipping that parallels the exclusions from exhibitions, shows, and negative criticism that avant-garde artists received during their own time. In the case of Duchamp, his work suffered under the burdens of tradition and taste because of his

³⁵³ Ibid., p. 50.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 50-51.

decisions to reconsider the work of art, to use past styles as material for new works, and to recontextualize fragments into new contexts. Because Duchamp's work was so innovative and challenging to the tradition it came out of, critics and audiences alike marginalized and excluded it.

The rejection of *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* and *Fountain* show how moderate wing clipping marginalized unconventional and innovative expressions and prevented them from having a maximal impact in their time. These works eventually carved out a place within the artworld and changed the trajectory of art and art making. However, their initial exclusion raises concerns about restrictions on the expansion of expression – both linguistic and aesthetic. Avant-garde art actively examines and reimagines life by generating new art and expression; therefore, it is in constant “dialogue” with our experiences of a changing world. It is important to allow these artists the space to develop their work in order to engage with and reflect the environment around them. Restrictions along the lines of the wing clipping we have been dealing with throughout this dissertation endanger such expression and its free exploration.

In the next section of argument, I explicitly examine how Duchamp defamiliarized and challenged the conception of the work of art through considering “choosing” to be a sort of making, as well as through treating past styles and existing objects as “material” to be reimagined and recontextualized. Each of these innovations, as outlined by Bürger in *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, is related to the wing clipping that avant-garde art received. As such, I explore how these factors impaired the reception of Duchamp's work. In addition, I argue contra Bürger that avant-garde movements were not a failure. Rather, I suggest that Duchamp successfully integrated art into the praxis of

life through both the work he created and the life he lived. Duchamp's alternative exhibition sites that included liminal spaces like balconies, entrances to exhibitions, and even his own studio, combined art and life. The way Duchamp made new space for himself in the artworld after his rejections profoundly impacted the trajectory of art making and what it means to be an artist. As we shall see in the next section of argument, Duchamp is an example of an artist endowed with genius whose wings were clipped by taste.

IV. Marcel Duchamp and the Case of Minimal Wing Clipping

A. Introduction

The next step in this investigation is to examine the implications of moderate wing clipping. The concern set out at the beginning of the chapter remains: Will wing clipping damage or endanger innovative and challenging expressions by pressing them to the margins? Will these expressions be excluded because they are so different from the norm that they threaten to subvert it? In order to address such questions here, I examine restrictions upon avant-garde expression, and in particular, upon the work of Marcel Duchamp.

Today, Duchamp is known as much for his innovative contributions to art as for the scandals that his works caused in their time. Some of his works were so controversial that they were rejected from exhibitions, most notably in Paris and New York. Thierry de Duve details how Duchamp consciously courted controversy and instigated his own exclusion from juried shows. He argues that the selection and submission of alternative works in line with current expectations and taste could have secured more exhibition

success for Duchamp, but instead of submitting works that were similar to his prior, more successful efforts or the aesthetic vogue of the day, Duchamp often deliberately chose works that were challenging and different. When faced with the threat of exclusion, he could have altered his style or even the titles of works in order to gain acceptance more easily. But as Duchamp claimed time and time again, particularly with reference to the ready-made, making art is a matter of choosing.³⁵⁵ Duchamp wanted the freedom to make his own aesthetic choices rather than having ideas dictated to him by the artworld. For this reason, Duchamp explored the use of alternative materials and unconventional modes of art making and refused to conform to the established rules of the artworld. He did not change his mode of art making when faced with artworld restrictions and exclusions. If anything, these pressures reinforced Duchamp's instincts and re-entrenched his approach to aesthetics.

Significantly, the notion that choosing could be considered a kind of creative making posed a threat to traditional conceptions of art production. The radicality of this move is one of the sources of the troublesome reception that Duchamp's works received at first – and why his wings were clipped by taste and culture. It is important to note that not only did *Fountain* and *Nude No. 2* return to the artworld in spite of their initial exclusions, but they also influenced and ultimately pushed it forward. After being rejected from the artworld, these works carved out new space for themselves in it, and thereby made room for other challenging works and ideas in their wake. We can trace out the impact of Duchamp's innovations on the trajectory of art in variety of movements

³⁵⁵ Thierry de Duve. *Kant After Duchamp*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996., p.161-162. In an interview with George Charbonnier, Duchamp explains the role of choice in art. In particular, he speaks of choice in the construction of readymades. We might also broaden this point to include the variety of choices that occur during the creative process.

including avant-garde, Pop, and mixed media art.³⁵⁶ Nonetheless, we can see that minimal wing changed Duchamp's perspective on the artworld and made him reconsider his place within it and whether he truly wanted one. He challenged norms and conventions with his work – questioning the institution of art and of taste with his reconsiderations of work and exhibition practices. So while Duchamp continued making art, it was often done in secret, or exhibited in an alternative way. I argue that Duchamp never fully felt at home in the artworld after these early rejections.³⁵⁷ As such, we must consider whether Duchamp would have made more art if he had gained more acceptance and comfort in this environment, that is, if his wings had not been clipped. We might alternatively wonder whether this pressure spurred an increase in Duchamp's creativity. In addition, we must consider how Duchamp's art and life serve as a model for the integration of art into the praxis of life, contra Bürger's claims regarding the failure of the avant-gardes to accomplish this goal.

B. Duchamp's Early Rejection: *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*

Early in Duchamp's career, he received a rejection that turned out to be formative for his approach to aesthetics. In 1912, he submitted *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* to the Paris Indépendants show, genuinely expecting the painting to be “welcome in the cubist room.”³⁵⁸ Instead, it was considered indecent. Even his brothers, artists Jacques

³⁵⁶ Arguably, Warhol's silkscreen paintings rely heavily upon the avant-garde interventions of Duchamp, and in particular, his notion of choice as making. Warhol and other members of his inner circle chose what we might call “readymade” photographs (publicity stills, newspaper clippings, etc.) to reconsider in his mass produced silkscreen paintings. The series of Marilyns, Jackies, and Elvises spring to mind here, as do the “Death and Disaster” paintings like *Tuna Fish Disaster*.

³⁵⁷ Here, I am thinking of the German term, “*heimatlos*,” literally meaning “without home” or “homeless.” In the final stage of this argument, I will assert that Duchamp's exclusions and expatriation from France led to his feelings of homelessness in the artworld.

³⁵⁸ De Duve, p. 137.

Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, told him so. Never before had a nude been depicted in this way: not only was the nude in motion, but it was also going down the stairs, creating several abstract knees in the process. While these innovations might seem minor from a contemporary perspective, they were downright shocking to an early 20th century audience. With this work, Duchamp tested the boundaries of nude paintings in relationship to cubism, and thereby reimagined and recontextualized this subject matter. Perhaps, as de Duve suggests, if Duchamp had changed the title, the work would have been more acceptable to the group – the nude figure might have been swallowed up into the work’s cubist abstraction.³⁵⁹ However, Duchamp had no intention of altering his work or in tempering its innovative and subversive nature.

T.J. Demos describes the events in this way:

What contributed to this crisis of the identity of artistic mediums was Duchamp’s experience in the spring of 1912 of the rejection of his *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* by the Salon des Indépendants. The exhibition featured a display of cubist paintings by the Puteaux group led by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, which also included Duchamp’s brothers Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, all of whom objected to Duchamp’s canvas on the grounds of its perceived inappropriateness according to the tacit rules of artistic discourse at the time – nudes do not walk down stairs, they explained. Rather than submit to self-censorship when the organizers asked him to at least change the title (which itself points to the newfound significance of naming functions for the meaning of art at the time), Duchamp preferred simply to remove the work from the exhibition.³⁶⁰

Altering the work went against Duchamp’s principles and artistic integrity. Despite the fact that the painting exhibited a different approach to cubism, Duchamp felt that his work was consistent with and contributed to the fledgling movement. He removed his painting from consideration rather than changing it in any way – “out of affection for his

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 137.

³⁶⁰ T.J. Demos. *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007., p. 96.

brothers but also out of real bitterness” according to de Duve.³⁶¹ In the face of possible censorship, Duchamp dug in his heels – or should I say, his knees – and withdrew his work.

It is important to note before proceeding further that Duchamp had a great respect for history and tradition, but was nonetheless frustrated by the artworld of his time.

Gloria Moure states:

Duchamp grew up in a cultured family environment in which, through his mother’s influence, the plastic arts played an important part. This somewhat rarefied atmosphere [...] brought with it a respect for authentic tradition that was deeply rooted and afforded Marcel in particular – and the Duchamps as a family – a certain distance and circumspection that enabled him to survive unscathed the cultural oppression of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and to comprehend early on the true signs of his time. Nevertheless, the real extent of that independent nature was not revealed until social and artistic conventions threatened the artist’s own creative capacity. And it should be borne in mind, too, that during his youth a continued dissatisfaction with the prevailing approach to artistic creation – and by extension, to the whole of life itself – certainly induced him to go his own way [...] Such notorious events as Duchamp’s works failing to find a place at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris played a considerable part, but they were by no means the principal cause of change, for his dissatisfaction went much deeper than mere resentment.³⁶²

Duchamp’s impulse to thwart conventions was a sign of his independent nature, but by no means was a sign of contempt or disregard for history and tradition. At times, his status as an iconoclastic figure in aesthetics obscures this point. Duchamp’s innovative explorations and choices were executed with the aim of pushing art forward and expanding the aesthetic sphere, not merely for the sake of stirring up controversy or attracting attention to himself.

Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2) would not be the only exclusion in Duchamp’s career. This rejection at the Paris Indépendants show shaped his approach to

³⁶¹ De Duve, p. 133.

³⁶² Gloria Moure. *Marcel Duchamp: Works, Writings, and Interviews*. Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2009., p. 9.

exhibition and the artworld going forward. In spite of the pressure to alter his works to be closer to the taste of the day, Duchamp forged ahead with his own vision of art and art making. Because of his experience with rejection, it is probable that Duchamp submitted *Fountain* in the knowledge that it would be considered controversial. “[B]y 1917, sincerity was no longer the issue: Duchamp knew he was putting the Indeps to a test when he fabricated an unknown self-proclaimed artist whose supposed expectations he expected to be betrayed.”³⁶³ By this point in his career, Duchamp was cannily aware of the way his submissions might be treated, so much so that he probably knew that *Fountain* would be excluded from the show. According to de Duve, “the least we can say is that neither *Fountain* nor the *Nude* met the expectations of the two societies, respectively. It’s not that the works were not on the level, they were an act of treason, and as such, they were rejected.”³⁶⁴ Through a series of proportions, de Duve comes to the conclusion that had Duchamp submitted *Portrait of the Chess Players* to the Paris Indépendants and *The Chocolate Grinder* to the New York Independents, respectively, expectations would have been fulfilled rather than betrayed.³⁶⁵ Duchamp would have gained more exhibition success with works that were deemed to be more in line with his prior efforts as well as with the prevailing taste of the day. As we shall see, Duchamp showed little interest in conforming to the standards of taste.

C. A Pattern of Behavior Emerges: The Rejection of *Fountain*

In 1917, under the pseudonym of Richard Mutt, Duchamp submitted a urinal to the Society of Independents for display in their upcoming exhibition. With this act, he

³⁶³ De Duve, p. 137. See Chapter Two, especially p. 99-143.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 136.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 136-138.

problematized the notion of the work of art and reconceptualized it. Along with the urinal, he submitted the requisite six-dollar fee that should have guaranteed its acceptance. In spite of the fact that the show was designed to include all submissions regardless of medium or quality, the work was rejected. The committee refused to show the work alongside the others, and instead, displayed it behind a partition where no one could see it.³⁶⁶

In order to better appreciate the implications of the exclusion of *Fountain*, it is important to understand the mission of the Society des Indépendants, the French parallel to the Society of Independent Artists: “Ni récompense, ni jury,” or “No prizes, no jury.” In other words, all works that are submitted will be included within the show. The New York Independents show proved to be quite inclusive; it exhibited 2,125 works by 1,235 artists (414 women and 821 men).³⁶⁷ The inclusive notion of “no jury” has a deeper meaning when examined from the perspective of taste, however. No jury = no judgment = no taste. Suspending or withholding judgment about a work means refusing to compare it to others you have encountered before or to compare your judgment to that of other people.³⁶⁸ Such a lack of judgment eliminates the socio-normative dimension of taste from the equation. Thus, works included in the show have not been judged and therefore are without taste. Despite the guarantee of “independence,” or even “tastelessness” of the exhibition, *Fountain* was rejected, or more accurately, segregated

³⁶⁶ De Duve, p. 98. See also, Anonymous. “The Richard Mutt Case.” *The Blind Man 2* (May 1917): 5.; Pierre Cabanne. *The Documents of 20th Century Art: Dialogues With Marcel Duchamp*. Trans. Ron Padgett. New York: Viking Press, 1979., p. 55.; Helen Molesworth. “Work Avoidance: The Everyday Lives of Marcel Duchamp’s Readymades.” *Art Journal* 57 (4) (Winter 1998): 51.

³⁶⁷ De Duve, p. 98. In particular, the inclusion of so many female artists was extraordinary for its time.

³⁶⁸ See Chapter Two for an extended discussion of Kantian taste and judgment.

and displayed away from the rest of the works behind a partition and away from the eyes of the exhibition attendees.³⁶⁹

It should be noted, however, that this was not the first time Duchamp submitted a readymade to an exhibition. He actually displayed readymades in the “Exhibition of Modern Art” at the Bourgeois Galleries and in the “Four Muskateers Show” at the Montross Gallery that received no public notice.³⁷⁰ It is possible that the audience did not realize that these everyday objects were on display, let alone that they were works of art. According to Duchamp in a letter to Marcel Jean in 1952, he displayed readymades “in an umbrella stand at the entrance of the [Bourgeois Galleries] show.”³⁷¹ This subtle integration of art into life, made possible by the choice of everyday objects that would blend in to the scene of the gallery, may account for the lack of public reaction to Duchamp’s early readymades. Their incorporation was so complete that individuals were unable to recognize these objects as works of art; the distinction between art and life had collapsed. Thus, readymades are both controversial and banal; either an audience perceives these works as a threat because of their integration of art and life or it does not perceive them to be art at all.

As controversial as *Fountain* was to the Society of Independents, the work’s exclusion received little notice in 1917, and then it disappeared. Duchamp resigned from the board of Independents and from his role on the hanging committee after the exclusion of *Fountain*, but his true role in the submission of this work and the ensuing scandal would remain secret for quite some time. Even in his communication with his sister and

³⁶⁹ De Duve, p. 98.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 102. The list of readymades in these shows varies widely, and as such they are officially “unidentified.”

³⁷¹ Ibid, p. 102. See footnote #22. See also *Marcel Duchamp: Letters to Marcel Jean*. Munich: Silke Schreiber Verlag, 1987, p.77.

confidante, Suzanne, Duchamp concealed his role by attributing the work to another artist. In one letter he states, “One of my female friends under a masculine pseudonym, Richard Mutt, sent in a porcelain urinal as a sculpture.”³⁷² Duchamp felt that he could not comment upon *Fountain*’s absence from the show (publicly or privately) without signaling his role in the submission.

An unsigned editorial in *The Blind Man* (number two),³⁷³ likely written by Duchamp, defends the work. In “The Richard Mutt Case,” he states:

They say any artist paying six dollars may exhibit. Mr. Richard Mutt sent in a fountain. Without discussion, this article disappeared and never was exhibited. What were the grounds for refusing Mr. Mutt’s fountain: – 1. Some contended that it was immoral, vulgar. 2. Others, it was plagiarism, a plain piece of plumbing. [...] Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view – created a new thought for that object.³⁷⁴

Not only does the author point out that the urinal is not vulgar – after all, it is just a piece of plumbing – but he also stresses the artist’s choice of the object. These emphases accord with Duchamp’s descriptions of the readymade selection process and his notion of choosing as a kind of making.³⁷⁵

³⁷² Ibid., p. 104. From Francis Naumann, ed. “Affectuesement, Marcel: Ten Letters from Marcel Duchamp to Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 22 (4) (1982): 8. This is an interesting dodge, and a heavily guarded move for Duchamp to make with his closest sibling. We might also note that by this time, Duchamp was already playing with pseudonyms of his own, including Rose Sélavy.

³⁷³ *The Blind Man* was a magazine co-edited by Duchamp, Henri-Pierre Roché, and Beatrice Wood. In Volume Two, the magazine included a photograph of *Fountain* taken by Alfred Stieglitz and a response article by Louise Norton entitled, “Buddha of the Bathroom.” A short editorial, often attributed to Duchamp, preceded this article.

³⁷⁴ Anonymous. “The Richard Mutt Case.” *The Blind Man* (2). Ed. Henri-Pierre Roché, Beatrice Wood, and Marcel Duchamp. New York: Published by Henri-Pierre Roché. p. 5. Because of the defense and the description of the readymade included in this introduction, it is often attributed to Duchamp. In what follows, I will treat the passage as if Duchamp had written it.

³⁷⁵ De Duve, p. 161-162 and Cabanne, p. 48, p. 54, and p. 55.

Duchamp was reimagining and problematizing traditional notions of the work of art and rethinking what it means to be an artist. Both moves are related to the controversy that sprung up in relation to *Fountain*. In Bürgerian terms, with this work, Duchamp removed the urinal from its functional context – the bathroom – and resituated it in the gallery. With *Fountain* in it, we can imagine that the gallery became a bathroom, the urinal a work of art – an unexpected and controversial confluence, to be sure. Bürger would suggest that the change of context – and the conflict between a urinal’s functional context and the gallery context – is one source of shock for the audience.³⁷⁶ According to Caroline Cros, through such decisive and challenging moves, Duchamp was:

inventing another category of artwork, ‘works of art that are not art,’ from wholly functional everyday objects devoid of any apparent aesthetic qualities that he purchased in hardware stores or, sometimes, assembled with one or more of his closest friends. The English word ‘ready-made’ suited Duchamp perfectly and he made it his own in 1915; he could think of no better name for these now infamous ‘objects with inscriptions’ that have generated countless interpretations.³⁷⁷

Readymades spurred a number of different responses and interpretations; the difficulty of categorizing them contributed to the shock effect associated with avant-garde art by Bürger. This shock effect was limited to members of the hanging committee due to *Fountain*’s placement behind a partition during its first show.³⁷⁸ But even as audiences gained more access to it, the tension regarding the categorization and evaluation of *Fountain* remained.

Beatrice Wood, one of Duchamp’s co-editors of *The Blind Man*, provides an account of the discussion that took place among Independents board members about

³⁷⁶ Duchamp’s design for *The First Papers of Surrealism* in 1942 shows his interest in disrupting exhibition space. He installed *Sixteen Miles of String*, making it difficult to view the works and to move about the exhibition space easily. Demos, p. 9 and p. 190.

³⁷⁷ Cros, p. 54.

³⁷⁸ De Duve, p. 98.

Fountain. In some versions, she recalls it as a conversation between George Bellows and Walter Arensberg. In others, Arensberg and Rockwell Kent:

‘This is indecent!’ went on Kent flatly, with red face.
‘That depends upon the point of view,’ said Walter gently.
‘We cannot show it,’ went on Kent flatly, with red face.
‘The entrance fee has been paid, we cannot refuse it,’ blandly added Walter.
‘But it is gross, offensive.’
‘Only in the eye of the beholder.’
‘There is such a thing as decency, an end to how far a person can go.’
Walter said mildly, ‘But the purpose of this project is to accept anything an artist chooses. It is in our bylaws.’
There was an ominous silence, then Kent exploded, ‘Do you mean that if a man chose to exhibit horse manure we would have to accept it!’
‘I’m afraid we would,’ answered Walter, with mock sorrow, slowly shaking his head suggesting that all was not as simple as it seemed...
‘Someone has sent it as a joke,’ continued Kent in anger.
‘Or a test,’ finished Walter patiently.
The pristine oval white object on a black pedestal gleamed triumphantly. It was a man’s urinal upside down.³⁷⁹

Despite Arensberg’s protests, the work was segregated. According to Louise Norton in “Buddha of the Bathroom,” the urinal challenged the committee and founding motto of the group: “Like Mr. Mutt, many of us had quite an exorbitant notion of the independence of the Independents. It was a sad surprise to learn of a Board of Censors sitting upon the ambiguous question, what is ART?”³⁸⁰

Even if the Independents proved to be bound by the current standards of taste, and so were independent in name only, Duchamp was interested in questioning the definition of art and how far it extends. As Gloria Moure puts the point, “The conventions that bore down on the sensibilities of Marcel Duchamp went beyond the superficial level of establishing social customs and cultural norms; they concerned the classification and interpretation of objects and phenomena, and consequently, the role played by art and by

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 90-91. The reflection is borrowed from Francis Naumann, ed. “I Shock Myself: Excerpts from the Autobiography of Beatrice Wood,” *Arts Magazine* 51 (9) (1977): 135-136.

³⁸⁰ Louise Norton. “Buddha of the Bathroom.” *The Blind Man* 2 (May 1917): 6.

the artist in all this.”³⁸¹ This unconventional bent is also reflected in Duchamp’s 1913 work, *The Green Box*. In it, he ponders, “Can one make works which are not works of art?”³⁸² This question goes part of the way towards explaining his choice of everyday objects as works of art. It also corresponds to Duchamp’s editorial defense of *Fountain* and of readymades generally.

As Moure goes on to explain, the choice of readymades runs in both directions.

You choose it just as it chooses you:

Duchamp [...] speak[s] of objects observed through a shop window, pointing out that the choice is a two-way one in the sense that the window also demands something from the viewer. Nevertheless, the demands made by the object upon the creator-selector are not based on attraction – which depends on the latter’s taste – but on absolute indifference, on neutrality, in other words, on a complete absence of good or bad taste (aesthetics), or total ‘anaesthesia.’³⁸³

According to Duchamp, choosing was as important as making. In fact, choosing *was* making for Duchamp – a radical reorientation to and reconceptualization of the work of art. In the case of the readymade, Duchamp argued that the object must not be considered to be beautiful or ugly. “It’s very difficult to choose an object because at the end of fifteen days you begin to like it or hate it. You have to approach something with indifference, as if you had no aesthetic emotion. The choice of ready-mades is always based on visual indifference and, at the same time, on the total absence of good or bad

³⁸¹ Gloria Moure. *Marcel Duchamp: Works, Writings, and Interviews*. Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2009., p. 6.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 63. The notion of “anesthesia” as outlined here recalls the motto of the Independents – “no jury, no prizes.” Moreover, I want to pause here to note that Duchamp, like Warhol, was interested in window displays. Warhol used the window of Bonwit Teller for an exhibition space early in his career, before securing a show at a traditional gallery. Duchamp took inspiration for his readymades from window displays; he encountered *The Chocolate Grinder* in a window in Rouen. See Cabanne, p. 14.

taste.”³⁸⁴ Such indifference to established taste challenged and defied aesthetic norms. The selection of commonplace items subverted notions of medium, originality, and the institution of art.

On the one hand, Duchamp claimed to have chosen his readymades indifferently, but on the other, he must have been aware of how a urinal would be received by an artworld that was *not* aesthetically indifferent. For one thing, this was not the first rejection Duchamp had received from the artworld.³⁸⁵ Not everyone would be able to recognize *Fountain* as “just a piece of plumbing” and divorce it from its usual function and the repugnance associated with bodily functions and human waste.³⁸⁶ Nor for that matter, would many be able to see it as a work of art. Cros states, “For Duchamp, the ready-made was above all a ‘rendez-vous,’ a fortuitous encounter with an object that he plucked from its habitual context and promoted to the status of an artwork. It was not, strictly speaking, an idea, but a ‘revolution’ in the conception and the definition of the artwork.”³⁸⁷ This argument stresses how Duchamp recontextualized objects in order to problematize and expand the concept of art by questioning whether he could make works that were not works of art. In this sense, Duchamp’s readymades were a provocation.

It is my contention that Duchamp’s work was an assault on the current standards of taste. He chose and submitted in the knowledge that his works would be controversial. Despite this insight, or perhaps because of it, Duchamp refused to modify his work or change his selections. As Yve-Alain Bois frames the point: “...with his R. Mutt,

³⁸⁴ Cros, p. 55. The quote stems from an interview with Pierre Cabanne. See Cabanne, p. 48.

³⁸⁵ See the discussion of the rejection of *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* in the next stage of the argument.

³⁸⁶ See Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror*, for a fuller discussion of repugnance and abjection.

³⁸⁷ Cros, p. 57. The idea of placing objects in a new context in order to get individuals to see them in a new way links up with the Situationists’ notion of “détournement.” See Sadie Plant’s *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Duchamp would be pinpointing the tautological norm of exclusion on which the modern establishment is based.”³⁸⁸ Duchamp, in this case with *Fountain*, pressed the boundaries of art and institution for a show that was designed to be without jury or judgment. By selecting a urinal, Duchamp consciously courted controversy and aimed to shock his audience. He wanted to see how far the selection committee would be willing to go for the sake of their mission. Having established the fact of Duchamp’s wing clipping, in the next section of argument, I examine the consequences of it for his aesthetics and exhibition practices.

**D. The Effects of Duchamp’s Wing Clipping:
Playing at Giving Up Art, Alternative Exhibition Practices, and the *Boîte-en-Valise***

Due to the exclusions outlined above, Duchamp didn’t feel fully at home in the artworld. As Jindřich Chalupecky puts it, “[Duchamp] realized that there was no place for him in the contemporary art world. He drew the appropriate conclusions.”³⁸⁹ Although Chalupecky does not expand upon this thought, as I have argued above, Duchamp’s response to his *heimatlos* feeling was to make his own work on his own terms, crafting art that would challenge and ultimately expand the aesthetic sphere and the circle of what can be considered a work of art. In order to do so, Duchamp needed to negotiate his discomfort and place within the artworld carefully. For one thing, he rarely stayed in one place for very long. He lived a nomadic life, often in exile, moving between France, New York, and Buenos Aires, and later crisscrossing America in order to collect information for the *Boîte-en-Valise* project. He fled Paris during the German

³⁸⁸ Benjamin Buchloh, Rosalind Krauss, Alexander Alberro, Thierry de Duve, Martha Buskirk, Yve-Alain Bois. “Conceptual Art and the Reception of Duchamp.” *October* 70 “The Duchamp Effect” (Autumn 1994): 126-146., p. 136.

³⁸⁹ Jindřich Chalupecky. “Marcel Duchamp: A Re-Evaluation.” Trans. Paul Wilson. *Artibus et Historiae* 6 (11) (1985): 125-136., p. 134.

occupation, keeping his general level of creativity intact all the while: “In order to cross Nazi checkpoints without drawing attention to his infamous artistic identity, which might have put him at risk at a time when collaborationist Vichy France was purging its enemies of the state, he disguised himself as a cheese merchant and shuttled a large suitcase containing material for the *Boîte*. Its portable structure seems to have anticipated such journeys.”³⁹⁰ Duchamp took care to fabricate an alibi for himself – including buying cheese and keeping track of his expenses – but he never had to answer any questions during border crossings.³⁹¹ Although fleeing Europe during the war is the most extreme case of Duchamp’s expatriation, it exemplifies his state of homelessness in both nation and the artworld. “[H]e had lived as a voluntary nomad for the majority of his adult life. Embracing an internal mobility as much as an itinerant residency, he escaped the pressures of traditions and the limitations of place-bound cultural conventions.”³⁹² Duchamp’s feelings of discomfort with artists and the artworld freed him to explore working outside of the confines of tradition and allowed him not to be limited to or restricted by a single culture or its influences.

As a result of these factors, Duchamp retreated from the artworld, and was rumored to have quit art making altogether in order to pursue chess playing.³⁹³ In truth, Duchamp never stopped working, even if he abandoned painting. He experimented with

³⁹⁰ Demos, p. 13.

³⁹¹ In Duchamp’s own words, “I had a friend, Gustave Candel, who was a wholesale cheese merchant in Les Halles, and I asked him if he could commission me to go and buy cheese for him in the unoccupied sector. He gave me a letter, which I took to the German authorities, and with that letter and a bribe of twelve hundred francs I got from a secretary that famous little card, called an *Ausweis*, which allowed me to travel by train from Paris to Marseilles. I thought I had to be very careful and buy cheese, and probably give an account of my expenses when I crossed the border between two zones, but the Germans never asked me any questions.” See Demos, p. 13. See also Calvin Tomkins’ *Duchamp: A Biography*. New York: Holt, 1996, p. 323-324.

³⁹² Demos, p. 20.

³⁹³ We might consider this to be yet another example of how Duchamp blurred the boundaries of art and life.

the notion of the work, explored alternative exhibition sites and practices, began a multi-year retrospective project that would occupy him for years (*Boîte-en-Valise*), and often worked in secret (the *Étant Donnés* assemblage was not revealed until after his death). When asked about this change in practice by Pierre Cabanne, Duchamp reflected upon the discomfort he experienced in the artworld after *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* was rejected.

Cabanne: Before going into details we could tackle the key event in your life, that is, the fact that, after about twenty-five years of painting, you abruptly abandoned it. I'd like you to explain that rupture.

Duchamp: It came from several things. First, rubbing elbows with artists, the fact that one lives with artists, that one talks with artists, displeased me a lot. There was an incident, in 1912, which 'gave me a turn,' so to speak; when I brought the 'Nude Descending a Staircase' to the Indépendants, and they asked me to withdraw it before the opening. In the most advanced group of the period, certain people had extraordinary qualms, a sort of fear! People like Gleizes, who were, nevertheless extremely intelligent, found that this 'Nude' wasn't in line with what they had predicted. Cubism had lasted two or three years, and they already had an absolutely clear, dogmatic line on it, foreseeing everything that might happen. I found that naïvely foolish. So, that cooled me off so much that, as a reaction against such behavior coming from artists whom I had believed to be free, I got a job...³⁹⁴

The exclusion was a disappointment on many levels. Duchamp's sense of homelessness can be traced, in part, to this event.

These rejections and the *heimatlos* feeling they created led Duchamp to explore alternative exhibition sites and practices. He avoided traditional gallery shows, turning down many invitations, including those of the Dada Salon in 1920 and Walter Arensberg's requests to exhibit work:

Duchamp installed his work during this time in unlikely places – specifically, domestic sites and studio contexts in New York, and hotel balconies in Buenos Aires and Paris. These are unusual display areas for sure, resistant to easy

³⁹⁴ Cabanne, p. 17.

classification and clear definition, which is perhaps why Duchamp favored them. They suggest so many quotidian sites that would offer refuge from the structured zones of official order, dominated by specialized activities and conventional modes of reception, namely the art galleries and museums that Duchamp made every effort to avoid during the later part of the war. It appears that the debacle surrounding the exhibition of the *Fountain*, as well as the early controversy prompted by his *Nude Descending a Staircase*, left him reluctant to exhibit his work in any formal environment for years to come. On this Duchamp was suggestive, if evasive: he was fond of explaining that the French verb ‘*exposer*’ was too close to ‘*épouser*’: he wished to avoid ‘exhibition’ as much as ‘marriage’ during these years, each implying an unacceptable level of restriction.³⁹⁵

Duchamp made the active decision not to exhibit on any terms but his own. This meant that he rethought exhibition entirely. He often selected spaces that indicated his interest in boundaries – balconies, entrances to exhibitions, and even his own studio.³⁹⁶

Duchamp’s exhibition choices incorporated art into the praxis of life by enmeshing everyday locations and aesthetic experience.

Duchamp’s fondness for exhibiting his works in his studio, where he mixed the domestic aesthetic functions of the space, is an interesting case in point. Regarding *Trébuchet (Trap)*, a readymade hatrack, Duchamp said the following: “It was on the floor and I kept walking into it. It was making me crazy so I finally said: okay, if it is going to stay on the floor I will nail it there.”³⁹⁷ This playful approach to exhibition is central to Duchamp’s attitude. Photographs included in *Boîte-en-Valise* show that he placed *Fountain* hanging above one of the doorways and *Bicycle Wheel* in a corner.³⁹⁸

Consistently, Duchamp placed the readymades in ways that highlighted their change of

³⁹⁵ Demos, p. 118.

³⁹⁶ Duchamp specifically had a balcony or terrace in mind when he sent a gift to his newly married sister Suzanne and her husband Jean Crotti. He called the work *Unhappy Readymade*. He instructed the couple to hang a geometry book on their balcony – exposing it to wind and the elements, as well as any chance occurrences. In his playful manner, Duchamp commented, “the wind had to go through the book, choose its own problems, turn and tear out the pages.” See Demos, p. 115. See Cabanne, p. 61.

³⁹⁷ Cros, p. 58. This quotation is from an unpublished interview with Sidney Janis, of the Carroll Janis Collection in New York.

³⁹⁸ Demos, p. 119-120.

context and their newfound reusability. One might say this move pointed out the readymades' homelessness. Duchamp's desire to coinhabit space with these works also highlights his own feeling of homelessness in the artworld.

Helen Molesworth comments on both the placement of the readymades in the studio and on Duchamp's documentation of them:

[W]e see the readymades installed, not on pedestals or in vitrines, but positioned (strategically, in a manner that evokes furniture and objets d'art) around an armchair – a coatrack nailed to the floor in front of a bicycle wheel atop a kitchen stool. There is a photograph in the background of which we spy the urinal suspended from a doorjamb; in the foreground a shovel dangles from the ceiling. More photographs: a film-noirish one of the shadows cast by an off-kilter hat rack [...] That Duchamp thought enough of these photographs to include them in his retrospective *Boîte en Valise* (1941) and to color them, their sepia tones rendering them 'historical,' is not surprising. During the initial 'invention' of readymades his studio was their major site of reception.³⁹⁹

Through the "exhibition design" of his studio, Duchamp created an aesthetic atmosphere for himself and any guests he might have. In this way, he blurred the boundaries between domestic, work, and display space. In the process, Duchamp simultaneously blurred the public / private distinction. Duchamp was not only molding his space into an aesthetic space for living. He was also shaping himself in the process. To borrow a Nietzschean phrase, Duchamp was making himself into a work of art and becoming himself in the process.⁴⁰⁰ In spite of his rejections, in other words, he was making himself comfortable with himself and his aesthetic tendencies. Duchamp merged art and life on an everyday basis.

³⁹⁹ Helen Molesworth. "Work Avoidance: The Everyday Life of Marcel Duchamp's Readymades." *Art Journal* 57 (4) (Winter 1998): 51-61, p. 51. While I agree with Molesworth that the inclusion of these photographs of readymades is significant, their coloring may not carry the weight she suggests. Duchamp handcolored all of the reproductions included in *Boîte-en-Valise*. Their sepia hue could indicate a historical eye upon the works, but it does not single them out wholesale.

⁴⁰⁰ See Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974, §270 and §290.

The placement of the readymades in his own studio and living space may have also served the function of keeping his works close to him. As aforementioned, Duchamp's works became part of collections all across the United States and ultimately, around the world. Rejection, expatriating, and the scattering of his works had a startling effect upon Duchamp. He thought more and more often about the collection of his works – and so the *Boîte-en-Valise* (*Box in Valise*) – project began. More than just a traveling museum of his works, *Boîte-en-Valise* allowed Duchamp to preserve his personal and aesthetic identity. Accuracy and faithfulness in the reproduction process was of paramount importance to Duchamp. In order to ensure such fidelity, Duchamp traveled to see each of his works in order to refresh his memory and aid in the reproduction process. The colors were so important to Duchamp that he hand-colored each photographic reproduction personally, returning the artist's hand into the reproduction process.⁴⁰¹ As Demos points out, the more scattered his works became, the harder Duchamp worked to regain them:

The more something is lost, the more energy is expended in its recapture. What results is an obsessive series of replications, a fetishistic multiplication seemingly without end, evident in the decades-long *Boîte* project as a whole, which, in its totality, amounts to an edition of 300 boxes with more than 22,000 reproductions in all. The point is that *La boîte-en-valise* was poised to both satisfy memory as well as to announce the cyclical pursuit of its impossible reconstitution.⁴⁰²

Duchamp's response to the threat of the dissolution and scattering of his works was to create a traveling museum of his oeuvre – that way, he would have an ongoing exhibition

⁴⁰¹ Demos, p. 49. Demos elaborates upon the process further: "For the coloring of the *Boîte*'s reproductions Duchamp employed the *pochoir* technique, an anachronistic, cottage-industry procedure, which required the time-consuming hand-coloring of each print by the use of stencils. By doing so, Duchamp avoided the excessive cost of color photography. But what resulted was an intensive artisanal process. 'The time required for obtaining a satisfactory first print is about a month for a highly skilled craftsman,' Duchamp explained. 'An average of 30 colours is required for each plate...[It takes] seven or eight weeks to apply 30 colours by hand through stencils.'" (p. 49).

⁴⁰² Demos, p. 48.

that preserved his work, and thereby, his identity. Making his corpus whole is part of Duchamp's quest to maintain his identity in exile. In addition to the "standard box," Duchamp created deluxe editions that contained both his previously exhibited works as well as an original work by Duchamp.⁴⁰³

It is clear that Duchamp was thinking about institution, exhibition, and legacy in his workings and reworkings of the *Boîte-en-Valise* project. As Martha Buskirk comments:

The curious thing about Duchamp is the way he resituated his work over and over again in relation to a changing network of institutional structures. *Fountain* was named first for a one-time show and simply disappeared. And then only later, as the museum itself became more of an institution to be reckoned with, did he start to make his work into a sort of museum. And so he himself was resituating his work in relation to the whole idea of exhibition context as other people were starting to think about those issues either through him or not through him.⁴⁰⁴

Perhaps we might go so far as to say that due to Duchamp's rejections, he sought to create his own institution in which to preserve his works on his own terms. Moreover, based upon the arguments set forth above, Duchamp is simultaneously working and reworking his sense of identity through this project.

E. Conclusion

To summarize, wing clipping had several effects upon Duchamp and his work. On the one hand, it restricted his activities and moved him to explore alternatives to mainstream aesthetic production and reception. On the other hand, these explorations

⁴⁰³ As Demos argues, "these first proofs paradoxically acquired the status of originals. As opposed to the procedural depersonalization contained within the process of the coloration of reproductions, owing to the task-based method embodied in the use of stencils, Duchamp's artisanal fixation on the surface unfolds to yet another level of fetishistic desire: reproductions became endowed with the auratic traces of originals. This is especially true of the first proofs, the so-called *coloriages originaux*, which served as prototypes for further reproductions." Ibid., p. 51.

⁴⁰⁴ Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon, eds. *The Duchamp Effect: Essays, Interviews, Roundtable*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996., p. 215-216.

turned out to be extremely fruitful for Duchamp. He thrived on the outskirts of the artworld, producing many works, even if he did not display them in traditional exhibition spaces. Thus, tasteful wing clipping shows contradictory tendencies. Duchamp, arguably an artist endowed with genius, found a way to make the restrictions in part “work” for him by working with, around, and against them. He never stopped making art; he just made it on his own terms instead of those of the artworld – and he ceased to care what its reaction would be to his works. Arguably, such restrictions could force an artist to stop working because they threaten to silence their new or controversial expressions. Not only did Duchamp continue to make art, but his works have also become extremely important to the artworld. These different reactions make it clear that it is crucial to examine the reception of avant-garde works over time. While Duchamp was momentarily silenced by the rejection and criticisms he received, his voice was ultimately heard when taste caught up to his works – so much so that Duchamp is considered one of the most influential artists of the 20th Century.

Ultimately, Duchamp’s aesthetic experiments changed exhibition practices and the trajectory of art making. He set the new rule to art through his readymades; with these works, Duchamp problematized and reconceptualized the notion of the work of art. Readymades posed a challenge to traditional notions of art and ultimately changed the trajectory of art making in the future. Duchamp chose and recontextualized objects to create a new idea – a revolution in thought as Cros frames the point.⁴⁰⁵ The tension between the objects in their original functional context and their new aesthetic context is the source of the shock effect that these works often received. This shock, in turn,

⁴⁰⁵ Cros, p. 57.

resulted in their troublesome reception. Readymades blurred the boundaries of art and life and injected art into the praxis of life, particularly when Duchamp exhibited them in his own domestic living space. As such, sometimes these works of art were indistinguishable from everyday objects. Duchamp's feeling of homelessness in the artworld after his various rejections led him to explore alternative exhibition spaces and retrospective options. His innovative use of everyday materials to reconceptualize the work of art led Duchamp to become one of the most influential artists of the 20th Century.

Chapter Four

Extreme Wing Clipping and the Multiplicity of Publics

I. Introduction

In Chapter Three, I began examining different ways we might understand Kant's notion of wing clipping in *The Critique of Judgment*. There, I investigated the effects on expression of a lack of wing clipping and moderate wing clipping. In the first case, a lack of wing clipping did not prove to be liberating for expression, but instead, led to incomprehensibility, a limitation on expression in its own right. In the second case, moderate wing clipping led to mixed results involving alienation, displacement, and homelessness in the art world. However, Duchamp's wing clipping also facilitated his ingenious expression because it forced the artist to explore new ways of making and exhibiting art that proved to be exemplary. In this chapter, I continue the exploration of wing clipping by looking at extreme cases where the wings of genius have been severely clipped or severed by taste.

As the previous sections have illustrated, wing clipping is both an aesthetic and political matter. It involves questions of inclusion and exclusion from community and culture. For the final interpretation of wing clipping it is important to examine the nature of public(s) in further detail. In particular, I investigate how it is that publics interact in order to authorize or condemn works of art. Put another way, I explore how extreme wing clipping could be considered a form of intense marginalization or censorship. In order to perform this analysis, I must first look at some of the different notions of public(s) in circulation. The leading question for the outset of this argument is whether "public" is a singular conception, as in Habermas's bourgeois public sphere, or whether

there are multiple publics that interact with one another. Notions of multivocality, publicity, and isolation will figure prominently in this analysis. Who has the power within a public to approve or censor works of art? Who has the power to remove them from consideration altogether? In order to address such queries, I explore the removal of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* from Federal Plaza in New York City, where competing publics or "counterpublics" were involved in the debate about the sculpture's place in the plaza.

The final argument of this chapter involves distinguishing publics, counterpublics, and cults. As has been intimated throughout the dissertation, pressures on expression can lead to the forced exclusion of certain types of expression. I argue that such restrictions are a form of silencing. While some communities whose expressions are under pressure of censorship may seek to rejoin the central public in question, others may prefer to maintain a separate status, even if it is unequal. Nancy Fraser outlines this distinction in terms of the publicist and the isolationist functions of counterpublics. In this section, I argue that while counterpublics may maintain this duality, cults purposely choose to isolate themselves from the central public in order to preserve their expressions and not be co-opted by normalizing forces. To reinforce this point, I turn to the notion of cult as understood by Walter Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility." While cults may begin their existence by defining themselves negatively *against* culture, they often develop their own values and expressions that serve to define and unite them in a positive way as well.

The arguments in this chapter help us to understand silence and silencing in different ways from in previous chapters. As mentioned above, some groups choose to

communicate exclusively with like-minded individuals who are already part of their own community. From an outside perspective, such communities may appear to be silent because their meanings are not heard, in the sense of understood. In such cases, the apparent silence of the group is chosen by the members that comprise it. This silence is intimately bound up in the intricacies of community-formation. Cultic expressions are not *silenced* per se, but are instead communicated only to a select few who will understand them more fully. We might contrast this with communities that are *forced* to communicate outside of society or the public at large due to the controversial or subversive nature of their views. This is a forced silencing or even “ghettoization” of expression.⁴⁰⁶ In other words, this is censorship.

II. Publics and Counterpublics

A. Introduction

Questions of taste and community are political. Who or what gets included (whether persons or works) depends upon the authorities or “tastemakers” in positions of power. Allowing space and giving voice are bound up with power dynamics and relationships. To return to an image from Chapter Three, authorities in the society determine who or what is located in the public arena and who or what is overlooked or pushed out. This formulation points to the fact that completely homogenous societies are actually quite rare if they exist at all. What happens to heterogeneity in restrictive societies? What happens to multivocality or even polyphony in such environments? Can all the various voices be heard, or are some silenced?

⁴⁰⁶ We might even reconsider Wittgenstein’s new boroughs or cul-de-sacs as marginalized centers of meaning where “illegitimate” or “unacceptable” expressions are ghettoized.

With these questions in mind, let us turn to the oft-debated work of Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, which provides the background for the ensuing argument. In particular, Habermas's characterization of the bourgeois public sphere is central to my arguments about the inclusion and exclusion that take place in publics. I address Habermas indirectly, however, by engaging with his critics such as Nancy Fraser, Robert Asen, and Michael Warner, who point to the limits of Habermas's model of publicity insofar as his conception of the public excludes individuals and groups by definition from the outset. Their focus on the importance of heterogeneity and multivocality is crucial to my argument going forward. For this reason, I deal with Habermas's critics directly and begin with the notion of multiple publics from the start.

B. Publics

According to Michael Warner in *Publics and Counterpublics*, "Several senses of the noun 'public' tend to be intermixed in usage. People do not always distinguish even between *the* public and *a* public, though in certain contexts the difference can matter a great deal. *The* public is a kind of social totality. Its most common sense is that of the people in general."⁴⁰⁷ Many theorists critique conceptions of the public sphere that claim to represent all people but nonetheless exclude some individuals from participation. According to Nancy Fraser, "[T]he concept of a public presupposes a plurality of perspectives among those who participate within it, thereby allowing for internal

⁴⁰⁷ Michael Warner. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books, 2002., p. 65, emphasis in original.

differences and antagonisms, and likewise discouraging reified blocs.”⁴⁰⁸ As we shall see shortly, the Habermasian notion of the public sphere has been criticized because it does not account or allow for the multiplicity addressed by both Warner and Fraser.⁴⁰⁹

Warner argues that “[a] public can also be a second thing: a concrete audience, a crowd witnessing itself in visible space, as with a theatrical public. Such a public also has a sense of totality, bounded by the event or by the shared physical space.”⁴¹⁰ Here, Warner discusses the gathering of individuals in perceptual proximity to one another due to a shared interest in a specific event or occasion. This gathering could occur for several distinct reasons, including political, aesthetic, or entertainment purposes. Not all publics require the coming together of individuals in physical space, however. Warner argues that texts of various sorts also have the ability to generate publics, and that these publics in turn generate more texts.⁴¹¹ For Warner, “the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation – like the public of this essay”⁴¹² constitutes the third and final sense of public. He focuses upon this third sense of public throughout the remainder of the essay. Although Warner distinguishes among three senses of the public,

⁴⁰⁸ Nancy Fraser. “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.” *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80., p. 70.

⁴⁰⁹ I will return to this argument in the next section in relation to Fraser’s notion of “counterpublics.”

⁴¹⁰ Fraser, p. 66.

⁴¹¹ Warner deals with this circularity in terms of the existence and address of publics. He considers the causality at work here to be a sort of “chicken and egg” problem. Arguably, this cyclical relationship can be extended to the dynamic, cyclical relationship that exists between public and text. Do texts generate publics? Or do publics first generate the texts? Finding the starting point of this process is actually quite difficult; therefore, determining the causal relationship is difficult as well. See Warner, p. 67.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

he also recognizes that they are not mutually exclusive.⁴¹³ They may overlap or combine in various ways.⁴¹⁴

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between publics and other kinds of groups. In “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” Fraser distinguishes between publics and communities during her discussion of publics and counterpublics. She states, “the concept of a public differs from that of a community. ‘Community’ suggests a bounded and fairly homogeneous group, and it often connotes consensus. ‘Public,’ in contrast, emphasizes discursive interaction that is in principle unbounded and open-ended, and this in turn implies a plurality of perspectives.”⁴¹⁵ Fraser utilizes this distinction to critique Habermas’s conception of the public sphere. It is to this critique that we turn now.

C. Fraser and Habermas

According to Fraser, Habermas’ public sphere “designates a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 66.

⁴¹⁴ Warner goes on to argue that several characteristics are central to the contemporary notion of the public sphere, three of which are important to our argument: 1) publics are self-organized bodies; 2) they are constituted by a relation among strangers; and 3) the address of public speech is both personal and impersonal. See Warner, p. 67-74; 74-76; and 76-87, respectively. The Habermasian conception of the public sphere satisfies all three of these qualifications. It constitutes a totality of some kind; it gathers persons together through face-to-face communication; and it disseminates texts in relationship to itself and / or texts are part of what generates the public sphere.

⁴¹⁵ Fraser, p. 80, footnote #29. We might also distinguish among the notions of public, counterpublic, cult, and subculture. I develop this line of argument in the next section.

state.”⁴¹⁶ The public sphere is essential to political life in that it promotes communication and deliberation among its participants. As Fraser argues:

At another level, [the public sphere] designated a specific kind of discursive interaction. Here the public sphere connoted an ideal of unrestricted rational discussion of public matters. The discussion was to be open and accessible to all; merely private interests were to be inadmissible; inequalities of status were to be bracketed; and discussants were to deliberate as peers. The result of such discussion would be ‘public opinion’ in the strong sense of a consensus about the common good.⁴¹⁷

Fraser points out that Habermas’ account would exclude people even under ideal conditions, and discourse counter to the state would not be openly permitted.⁴¹⁸ She reminds us that Habermas is investigating the development and decline of the bourgeois public sphere, as the subtitle of his work suggests. She further argues that Habermas’ account is restricted to a “historically specific and limited form of the public sphere which Habermas calls the ‘liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere.’”⁴¹⁹ Not all individuals were welcomed into the public sphere during its early stages of development. Notably, race, gender, and economic status were treated as prohibitive considerations barring persons from the public sphere. As a result, participants in this sphere (and their lack of diversity) were determined at the outset.

Fraser goes one step further and argues that Habermas *ignores* the counterpublics that existed at the same time as the bourgeois public sphere addressed in his account.⁴²⁰ In order to support her point, she turns to revisionist historiographers like Mary Ryan,

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p. 57. For our purposes, these discursive interactions involve the exchange of judgments of taste. Moreover, the claim is that these judgments may run counter to the official taste of the artworld or the prevailing discourses of the day. I will expand upon this point shortly. In addition, I would like to pause to note the resonance of “theater” and “arena” imagery with Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., p. 60-61.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 58

⁴²⁰ Ibid., p. 60-61.

who “documents the variety of ways in which nineteenth century North American women of various classes and ethnicities” were excluded from the public sphere, and how nonetheless they “constructed access routes to public political life.”⁴²¹ This corroborates Fraser’s sense that multiple public spheres existed from the very beginning, and that they were always positioned to compete with the mainstream public sphere. She states:

In fact, the historiography of Ryan and others demonstrates that the bourgeois public was never *the* public. On the contrary, virtually contemporaneous with the bourgeois public there arose a host of competing counterpublics, including nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women’s publics, and working class publics. Thus, there were competing publics from the start, not just from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as Habermas implies.⁴²²

As Robert Asen notes in “Seeking the ‘Counter’ in Counterpublics,” “Fraser [...] discerns an underlying assumption structuring this bourgeois public that regards the circumscription of public deliberation into a single, encompassing arena as ‘a positive and desirable state of affairs, whereas the proliferation of a multiplicity of publics represents a departure from, rather than an advance toward, democracy.’”⁴²³ While unity and community are generally positive attributes of groups, this does not imply that *univocality* ought to be the goal of public deliberations, particularly democratic ones. Fraser, in contrast to Habermas, argues that a multiplicity of voices and of public spheres would increase deliberation and in effect, promote democracy. In fact, on her account, multivocality is essential to the functioning of deliberative democracy. The exchange of genuinely different and even conflicting viewpoints is not only permissible in a

⁴²¹ Ibid., p. 61.

⁴²² Ibid., p. 61, emphasis in original.

⁴²³ Robert Asen. “Seeking the ‘Counter’ in Counterpublics.” *Communication Theory* 10 (4) (Nov 2000): 424-446., p. 424. See also Fraser, p. 66.

democracy, but is a foundational practice.⁴²⁴ Fraser argues that “in stratified societies, arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics better promote the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, overarching public.”⁴²⁵

Unrestricted rational discussion is certainly an ideal, but as Fraser argues, even Habermas recognized that the ideal was not fully achieved. She states, “According to Habermas, the full utopian potential of the bourgeois conception of the public sphere was never realized in practice. The claim to open access in particular was never made good.”⁴²⁶ The exclusion of persons and expressions has prompted theorists and philosophers to consider alternative conceptions of the public sphere. As Robert Asen argues:

This movement toward multiplicity [in conceptions of the public] has been spurred by recognition of social complexity and sociocultural diversity. A single, overarching public sphere ignores or denies social complexity insofar as it invokes a notion of publicity as contemporaneous face-to-face encounters among all citizens potentially affected by issues under consideration [...] A singular public sphere also suppresses sociocultural diversity in constituting an arena inimical to difference.⁴²⁷

Two important points emerge here. First, the contemporary public sphere has increasingly relied upon technological communication systems. In particular, the rise of the Internet and social networking sites has transformed communication methods and

⁴²⁴ In musical terms, we might characterize the multiplicity of potentially conflicting voices as a form of polyphony. Polyphony accounts for the possibility of dissonance as part of the melodic structure of music rather than as a force destructive to it.

⁴²⁵ Fraser, p. 66.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59. In aesthetic terms, this open access translates into the uninhibited exchange of judgments of taste – Kant’s ideal of a shared community of interlocutors. In this context, openness ought to extend to all persons and to their varied aesthetic perspectives even if they are unpopular according to the standards of taste in the artworld, understood here as a specific kind of public sphere. As I will go on to argue, aesthetic judgments or counterdiscourses that are silenced by the mainstream public can serve as the focal point for the formation of alternative communities, counterpublics, or cults.

⁴²⁷ Asen, p. 425.

thereby has transformed publics.⁴²⁸ The face-to-face model of deliberation still plays a role in public sphere communication, but it no longer maintains dominance.⁴²⁹ Second, because in our contemporary moment we are more willing to consider the social effects of our differences, we have moved towards models of publicness that are more inclusive of the diverse population and its multivocality.⁴³⁰ The recognition of exclusions of persons and ideas made it apparent that a univocal public is an illusion; such a public does not and cannot include all despite its claims to the contrary. Thus, because factors like race and gender are no longer considered to be legitimate bases for exclusions, our discourses have increasingly recognized the multiple (and already existing) publics and the multivocality present within them.

In this light, Seyla Benhabib “rejects the notion of a singular, overarching public sphere in favor of a ‘plurality of modes of association’ that constitute a medium of mutually interlocking and overlapping networks of opinion formation and dissemination.”⁴³¹ This formulation argues for a multiplicity of public spheres and intimates how these spheres might relate to and interact with one another. The ideas of “interlocking” and “overlapping” also lead to considerations about the persons who traverse and participate in several different communities or public spheres. Along similar

⁴²⁸ Asen argues against technology’s suitability for deliberative communication. He asserts that “electronic ‘agoras’ threaten to eclipse the deliberative functioning of the public sphere and reduce citizen participation to registering unreflected preferences through a vast telecommunications network.” (p. 425) Undoubtedly, many use the Internet in this fashion – some Facebook and Twitter participants, for example. However, some online communities function in a critical and thoughtful fashion and are explicitly designed to promote open deliberation and discourse. These, I would argue, could function efficaciously in the service of deliberative communication, contra Asen’s claims.

⁴²⁹ In the next chapter, I investigate how the cult of David Lynch utilized newsgroups, message boards, chat rooms, and early blogs to communicate about *Twin Peaks* with one another via the Internet and how this expanded the cult beyond face-to-face communication.

⁴³⁰ I mean this in particular relation to Habermas’ conception of the public sphere.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 424. This is drawn from Benhabib’s *Democracy and Difference: Contesting Boundaries of the Political*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

lines, Gerard Hauser articulates a vision of multiple public spheres in which “discursive practices form a lattice of spaces with boundaries of variable permeability [in a ‘reticulate structure’].”⁴³² Here, groups with different discursive practices exist alongside one another in clusters that crisscross and overlap. Hauser highlights the point that if these communities are open enough, individuals can participate in many different publics. This suggests the possibility of cross-public participation.⁴³³

D. Alternative Publics, Counterpublics, and Cults

Once we embrace the notion of a multiplicity of publics, we need to consider what different publics actually exist and how they relate to each other. In particular, because the theoretical move towards multiplicity is spurred by exclusions from a singular, allegedly univocal public sphere, we need to examine how alternative publics seek to define themselves vis-à-vis the mainstream public. On the one hand, alternative publics may seek to identify themselves based upon a shared set of values and expressions and to only communicate within their smaller, closed community. They may not seek a wider public, but instead, may be driven to preserve their identities and values apart from a larger public. We might refer to this as the “isolationist” function of counterpublics.⁴³⁴ On the other hand, alternative publics may explicitly establish

⁴³² Ibid., p. 425. See Gerard Hauser. “Vernacular Dialogue and the Rhetoricity of Public Opinion.” *Communication Monographs* 65 (2) (June 1998): 83–107. See Gerard Hauser. *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.

⁴³³ Both Benhabib’s and Hauser’s ideas about the multiplicity and multivocality of the public sphere call to mind Wittgenstein’s notion of language games as set forth in *Philosophical Investigations*. In particular, public multiplicity resonates with the way in which individuals may be a part of multiple communities or participate in multiple language games at the same time. (See Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Third Edition. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001.) The criss-crossing and interplay of such games and networks of association points towards the multivocality that Benhabib and Hauser argue for in their accounts of multiple public spheres.

⁴³⁴ Fraser, p. 67-68.

themselves *against* the public that excluded them. That is, these groups not only constitute themselves as a coexistent public that presents an alternative to the central public; they also actively define themselves *contra* that public. In some other cases, members of a counterpublic seek to communicate with the central public in order to gain acceptance and to rejoin it after a time. We might refer to this as the “publicist” function of counterpublics.⁴³⁵ Alternative publics may express one or both of the aforementioned functions, depending upon the context.⁴³⁶ Let us examine each of these functions of counterpublics as set out by Fraser⁴³⁷ and then proceed to contrast her notion of the counterpublic with the notion of the cult.

Fraser goes through several distinctions in her iterations of “counterpublic,” beginning with counterpublics as an “alternative” to the established or central public.⁴³⁸

Fraser states:

The history records that members of subordinated social groups – women, workers, people of color, and gays and lesbians – have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. I propose to call these *subaltern counterpublics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.⁴³⁹

Fraser begins with this notion of “parallel” or “alternative” publics that exist side by side with the mainstream public. As her account goes on, however, it becomes less neutral in tone; she stipulates that these communities are explicitly “counter” to the established

⁴³⁵ Fraser, p. 67-68.

⁴³⁶ According to Fraser, these functions of counterpublics exist in a dialectical relationship to each other. See Fraser, p. 68.

⁴³⁷ While Fraser was not the first to coin the term counterpublic, she popularized its use in contemporary discourse, especially because she connected it with the notion of the subaltern. Rita Felski was actually the first to use the term in 1989 in relation to the feminist public sphere in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67-68.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67, emphasis in original.

public as “subaltern.” Fraser makes the jump from separation and exclusion to “counter” without much evidence or argument. In part, Fraser may argue in this way because the alternative sites of expression under discussion have arisen in response to the exclusion of persons and expressions from the central public.⁴⁴⁰ However, just because individuals or groups are excluded from the mainstream public does not necessitate that they will be *against* that public; it merely suggests that they differ from that public. If anything, the mainstream public is *counter* to these alternative persons and expressions, not the other way around. Put simply, Fraser needs more evidence to back up the argumentative leap from alternative publics to counterpublics. In particular, it seems, she needs to get from exclusion, which is a social fact, to oppression, which requires or demands redress from the oppressor.

Fraser’s formulation makes it seem as if counterpublics form and that only *afterwards* they invent new expressions and develop interpretations of their identities. But this overlooks how counterpublics form *based upon* the exclusion or silencing of their identities and expressions. In other words, their segregation did not cause the development of new expressions, even if when separated, these groups continued to generate new expressions. Fraser seems to invert this causal relationship in her account. In fact, only because they are treated as alternative or subversive, individuals are forced to form a new community in which their expressions will be understood and accepted. In this setting, these counterpublics might amplify their defenses of identity in order to justify themselves vis-à-vis the central public.⁴⁴¹ Of course, these counterpublics continue to coin new phrases that reflect their experiences and situations as time goes by.

⁴⁴⁰ As articulated above, Fraser has argued that Habermas’ notion of the bourgeois public sphere is inherently discriminatory.

⁴⁴¹ Fraser, p. 68.

To reiterate the point, I propose an alternative theory of counterpublic formation in which the allegedly unacceptable nature of certain expressions and identities causes segregation into counterpublics rather than vice versa.

Multiple discourses reflect the identities of the individuals who express them and are therefore essential to the preservation of diversity within heterogeneous societies.⁴⁴²

We must recognize difference(s) in speech and choose expressions that do not imply that society is homogeneous. As Fraser points out:

Theorists like Jane Mansbridge have argued that ‘the transformation of “I” into “we” brought about through political deliberation can easily mask subtle forms of control. Even the language people use as they reason together usually favors one way of seeing things and discourages others. Subordinate groups sometimes cannot find the right voice or words to express their thoughts, and when they do, they discover they are not heard. [They] are silenced, encouraged to keep their wants inchoate, and heard to say “yes” when what they have said is “no.”’⁴⁴³

When a heterogeneous public is treated as if it were univocal, some voices and perspectives are not fully heard or included. In effect, the treatment of diverse individuals and their expressions as part of a homogeneous “we” silences difference by silencing alternative modes of expression within the “we.” Under these conditions, multivocality is made to seem nonexistent within the mainstream public.

As Fraser goes on to point out, “In stratified societies, unequally empowered social groups tend to develop unequally valued cultural styles. The result is the development of powerful informal pressures that marginalize the contributions of members of subordinated groups both in everyday life contexts and in official public

⁴⁴² Importantly, it is also related to the preservation of open public deliberation. I will return to this momentarily.

⁴⁴³ Fraser, p. 64. See also Jane Mansbridge. “Feminism and Democracy.” *The American Prospect* 1 (Spring 1990): 127.

spheres.”⁴⁴⁴ For this reason, publics may splinter into alternative publics or counterpublics in which endangered expressions may be heard, accepted, and understood. Individuals who are silenced often seek to express themselves within an alternative public sphere, if only for a time. We might, along with Asen, refer to this as the “isolationist” function of counterpublics.⁴⁴⁵ In this mode, groups consolidate into counterpublics in order to preserve their identities and expressions apart from the central public and to resist the pressure to conform.

Fraser goes on to argue that counterpublics function as “publicist”⁴⁴⁶ when excluded groups actively seek to communicate with the mainstream public. As publics, Fraser presumes that these groups ultimately want to communicate with wider and wider publics in order to persuade the mainstream about the legitimacy of their identities and expressions. Fraser states:

The point is that, in stratified societies, subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides.⁴⁴⁷

Here, Fraser articulates the isolationist and publicist functions of the counterpublic. On the one hand, she focuses upon the contestatory nature of counterpublics,⁴⁴⁸ in which they define themselves as *against* the mainstream public due to their exclusion or silencing by it. On the other hand, she argues that although the public sphere is constituted by conflict,

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 64

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 68. See also Asen, p. 429.

⁴⁴⁶ Asen, p. 429.

⁴⁴⁷ Fraser, p. 68.

⁴⁴⁸ Some, like Geoff Eley, have argued that publics are contestatory in nature: “The public sphere [as such] was always constituted by conflict.” (Fraser, p. 61). See also Geoff Eley, “Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century.” In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Ed. Craig Calhoun. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1992.

these counterpublics aim to communicate, persuade, and ultimately rejoin the wider mainstream public.⁴⁴⁹ Although Fraser acknowledges the importance of both the isolationist and publicist functions of the counterpublic, she focuses largely upon the publicist mode in her work. Fraser is interested in the interrelation of publics and counterpublics as seen through their communication, not in their “separatism” or isolation. There remains much to be said about the sort of communication that takes place within counterpublics in their isolationist mode, especially when they embrace their separatist status. I return to this point in my discussion of cults.

The publicist and isolationist modes of counterpublics might be better understood through an examination of the direction or goal of the communication in question. Asen states:

Counterpublic spheres maintain their public character by directing their arguments outward to society as a whole. In this way, they serve a dual function. Referencing the feminist counterpublic sphere, Felski explains that ‘*internally*, it generates a gender-specific identity grounded in a consciousness of community and solidarity among women; *externally*, it seeks to convince society as a whole of the validity of feminist claims.’⁴⁵⁰

Here, Asen refers to Rita Felski’s demarcation of two different discourses – communication that takes place *within* a public and communication that takes place *between* or *among* publics. We can call these discourses “intra-public communication” and “inter-public communication.”⁴⁵¹

Fraser focuses upon the “publicist” mode of the public because of the importance of preserving the identities and expressions of the excluded community and in order to

⁴⁴⁹ Fraser, p. 67-68 and Asen, p. 429.

⁴⁵⁰ Asen, p. 429, emphasis in original. See also Felski, p. 168.

⁴⁵¹ Fraser, p. 65-66.

“complicate the issue of separatism.”⁴⁵² To maintain the voice of communities undergoing silencing by the wider public, Fraser highlights the possibility of reestablishing inter-public communication.

In my view, the concept of a counterpublic militates in the long run against separatism because it assumes an orientation that is *publicist*. Insofar as these arenas are *publics* they are by definition not enclaves – which is not to deny that they are often involuntarily enclaved. After all, to interact discursively as a member of a public – subaltern or otherwise – is to disseminate one’s discourse to ever widening arenas.⁴⁵³

I agree with the spirit of Fraser’s account here; the drive to preserve excluded or endangered discursive communities is a goal worth pursuing. But Fraser is making dubious assumptions about publics here. She argues that *all* publics – counterpublics included – seek to express themselves to increasingly wider publics.⁴⁵⁴ In doing so, Fraser leans too heavily on the “publicist” conception of counterpublics, almost entirely neglecting their “isolationist” function in the process. This is particularly troublesome because Fraser also seeks to highlight the emancipatory potential of the dialectical relationship of the dual modes of counterpublics.⁴⁵⁵

While Fraser and Felski argue that all counterpublics exercise both the isolationist and publicist functions of the public sphere in an alternating fashion, this relationship is by no means guaranteed. Even when counterpublics emerge and define themselves against the central public, what happens next depends upon the goals of the group in question and how successful they are in accomplishing them.⁴⁵⁶ Some groups may

⁴⁵² Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., p. 67, emphasis in original.

⁴⁵⁴ This seems debatable. While this perspective is consistent with the definition of publics Fraser adopts in her essay, she does not explicitly defend this premise.

⁴⁵⁵ Fraser, p. 68.

⁴⁵⁶ In “Seeking the ‘Counter’ in Counterpublics,” Asen explores a version of this question. In particular, he investigates what it is that counterpublics are positioned counter to.

remain in the isolationist mode for a long time or perhaps even indefinitely. On Fraser's terms, those that remain in the isolationist mode are termed "enclaves" rather than counterpublics.

Asen, in contrast to Fraser, maintains a more neutral tone in his formulations about publics, and therefore, he can account for the expression of multiple counterpublics.

He states:

Counterpublics emerge as a kind of public within a public sphere conceived as a multiplicity. They illuminate differential power relations among diverse publics of a multiple public sphere. Counterpublics signal that some publics develop not simply as one among a constellation of discursive entities, but as explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants. Counterpublics in turn reconnect with the communicative flows of a multiple public sphere. Counterpublic theory discloses relations of power that obliquely inform public discourse and, at the same time, reveals that participants in the public sphere still engage in potentially emancipatory affirmative practice with the hope that power may be reconfigured.⁴⁵⁷

Asen recognizes that counterpublics express alternative meanings to those expressed by the central public. However, the hope he articulates here that power may be reconfigured need not imply that counterpublics will seek to rejoin the larger community even if communication remains open. This is, of course, one possibility among a series of possibilities, but in the sections that follow, I explore another possibility: isolationist counterpublics that seek to communicate only internally rather than to the central public. Before I do so, however, I will further examine the exclusionary power of publics through an investigation of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* affair and how its fate exemplifies silencing and censorship I have been outlining in this section.

⁴⁵⁷ Asen, p. 425.

III. Extreme Wing Clipping and the Public Sphere: Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*

In Section II, I examined how individuals are excluded from the public sphere. In this section, I investigate this issue in terms of the story of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*. I argue that the removal of *Tilted Arc* from Federal Plaza in New York affected a double silencing by 1) censoring the work and the artist by removing *Tilted Arc* from its installation space and 2) forcing the public debate surrounding the work to come to a close after the trial and appeals process ended in 1988. While aestheticians continued to critically discuss and debate the work and its status in spite of these attempts at silencing, what we might call "general public deliberation" about the legitimacy of the work was curtailed when the case was finally closed and the work was removed from Federal Plaza in 1989.⁴⁵⁸ The persistence of philosophical debate demonstrates that the silencing of *Tilted Arc* was incomplete even as culture clipped its wings in an extreme fashion, but the case nonetheless exemplifies the dangers to aesthetic expression posed by wing clipping.

Tilted Arc brings the question of the power of publics to censor into sharper focus. Erected in 1981 by Richard Serra on the grounds of New York's Federal Plaza (26 Federal Plaza, off Centre Street, New York, New York), *Tilted Arc* drew attention to the space of the plaza in a new way. Made of Cor-Ten steel and arranged in a slightly curving shape, the work was 12 feet high x 130 feet long x 3 inches thick. By some accounts,⁴⁵⁹ the work divided, cut up, or separated the plaza into discrete areas – making these spaces "difficult" or "dangerous" to access and making movement through the

⁴⁵⁸ Richard Serra. "Tilted Arc Destroyed." *Art in America* 77 (5) (May 1989): 34-47., p. 39.

⁴⁵⁹ Some testified to the obtrusive nature of the sculpture during the trial. I say by "some accounts" because preliminary testing for the work revealed that the work would not impede passage across the plaza, or the most common walking routes that persons elected to travel. See Gregg Horowitz. "Public Art / Public Space: The Spectacle of the *Tilted Arc* Controversy." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1) (Winter 1996): 8-14, p. 12-13.

plaza troublesome.⁴⁶⁰ *Tilted Arc* immediately generated much public debate about the work and whether it ought to be located in Federal Plaza. Questions under discussion ranged from the most fundamental, “Is it art?” to “Is it legitimate to have such a work or object in the plaza?” to “Does the work represent or reflect the plaza effectively?”

As Gregg Horowitz notes, “A few objections were raised immediately, but since expressions of displeasure are typical at first when any public art is installed, nothing came of them.”⁴⁶¹ That is, Horowitz argues, nothing came of them until William Diamond, the General Services Administration’s New York Regional Administrator, spearheaded a crusade to remove the work from the plaza.⁴⁶² This turn of events transformed the debate surrounding the work into a full-fledged controversy that ultimately ended in the work’s removal from the plaza. For those who argued that *Tilted Arc* was site specific, its removal amounted to the work’s destruction.⁴⁶³

Before proceeding further, it is important to note that *Tilted Arc* was commissioned by the United States General Services Administration’s Art-in-Architecture program. The program was to devote “one-half of one percent of the cost of

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 8, p. 11-12. Some particularly overheated responses to the sculpture suggested that the work could benefit terrorists by serving as a blast wall for bombings and explosions.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁶² Ibid., p. 8. This is particularly interesting because the GSA commissioned, approved, and installed the work in the first place.

⁴⁶³ For a thorough treatment of the site-specificity question, see Michael Kelly. “Public Art Controversy: The Serra and Lin Cases.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1) (Winter 1996): 15-22. Critics take both sides in this debate, arguing that it is a site-specific work and alternatively that it is not. While I do not want to enter into this debate in earnest, I recognize its importance vis-à-vis the discussions and arguments about *Tilted Arc*. Serra’s own stance on installation is crucial to understanding his resistance to the removal of his work in this case. As Serra puts the point, “Based on the interdependence of work and site, site-specific works address the content and context of their site critically. A new behavioral and perceptual orientation to a site demands a new critical adjustment to one’s experience of the place. Site-specific works primarily engender a dialogue with their surroundings.” See Richard Serra. “*Tilted Arc* Destroyed.” *Art in America* 77(5) (1989): 35-47, p. 41. Not only would Serra consider the fragments of *Tilted Arc* to not be the sculpture, properly speaking, but he would also consider its removal as a way to hinder or stop the dialogue it started.

the construction or repair of federal property to the funding of public art.”⁴⁶⁴ *Tilted Arc* underwent a standard approval procedure in which it was reviewed along with other proposals for the site. Serra’s submission was selected by a jury of “artworld judges” – not by a panel of bureaucratic administrators.⁴⁶⁵ That the work was commissioned by a federal program like the AIA as well as approved by a jury from the artworld is significant. This double endorsement provided *Tilted Arc* with governmental and aesthetic authority. However, the legitimacy of the work is ironic when viewed from the standpoint of the controversy that it generated. How could a work that was commissioned by a federal program and agreed upon by a panel of artworld experts be deemed improper or controversial enough to spur a campaign aimed at its removal? We might better understand the difficulties the work encountered through examining *Tilted Arc*’s nature and goals.

Serra intended to utilize *Tilted Arc* to make the passage *through* space into a contemplation *about* space, and in particular, the space of New York’s Federal Plaza.⁴⁶⁶

Hilde Hein argues:

[Serra] meant to confront the public in *behavioural space* ‘in which the viewer interacts with the sculpture in its context...to engage the public in a dialogue that would enhance, both perceptually and conceptually, its relation to the entire plaza.’ The sculpture would not literally interdict movement, but it would (and did) cause the viewer to feel blocked. The experience of oppression was real enough, but Serra wanted it to redirect attention to its actual source in the mechanisms of state power.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ Horowitz, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁵ Hilde Hein. “What is Public Art?: Time, Place, and Meaning.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1) (Winter 1996): 1-7, p. 2. See also, Horowitz, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁶ Hein, p. 4-5. I do not mean to engage with the issue of artist’s intention in this context.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3, emphasis in original. This idea about interaction with space and the feeling it engenders is explored in Anthony Vidler’s *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

Put another way, Serra wanted passersby to consider the space anew and to engage with their environment in ways that they had not before; he aimed to “bring the viewer into the sculpture.”⁴⁶⁸ Serra wanted workers and other users of the plaza to notice the space and to talk about it. What is interesting is that this “noticing” was experienced in a negative fashion. In fact, the engagement and discussion that Serra spurred with *Tilted Arc* were central to the work’s undoing and removal. But instead of fixing their negativity onto the government and its potential to oppress or restrict individuals, many people focused their ire on the sculpture itself for drawing these negative feelings to the surface.⁴⁶⁹ As Michael Kelly puts the point, “*Tilted Arc* had the *effect* of criticizing Federal Plaza – regardless of Serra’s intentions, designs, or words – by revealing its dysfunctional state. While exposing these problems, however, *Tilted Arc* also compounded them and soon became the scapegoat when people decided to do something about them.”⁴⁷⁰

According to preliminary studies done by Serra for the work, *Tilted Arc* would not actually disrupt the most traveled walking paths or the use of the non-functional fountain.⁴⁷¹ As Horowitz argues, “*Tilted Arc* did not interfere with paths of transit; rather it appeared to do so, but in the domain of fantasies of easy use that was exactly the problem. Serra did not cause the deadness and unusability of Federal Plaza, but he did make it manifest.”⁴⁷² So while *Tilted Arc* didn’t actually block foot traffic or cause workers to circumvent the sculpture on a daily basis, people *experienced* the work as if it prevented their “easy use” of the space. This spurred individuals to react negatively to

⁴⁶⁸ Kelly, p. 17. The quote is originally from Richard Serra. *Writings Interviews*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994., p. 127, emphasis added by Kelly.

⁴⁶⁹ Horowitz, p. 11.

⁴⁷⁰ Kelly, p. 20, emphasis in original.

⁴⁷¹ Horowitz, p. 12-13.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

the sculpture rather than to the space itself. After all, the space had not actually changed; the addition of the sculpture merely drew attention to the quality of the space in a new way. According to Horowitz, it exposed the unfulfilled promise of the plaza.⁴⁷³ Because of this manifestation, people reacted negatively towards the sculpture for making the unactualized potential of the space more evident in their experience.

In Horowitz's terms, responses regarding ease of use were actually fantasies about the potential of the plaza. As one federal worker, Joseph Liebman, testified, "I have worked at 26 Federal Plaza since 1969. While the plaza never fulfilled all my expectations, at least until 1980, I regarded it as a relaxing reflective space where I could walk, sit, and contemplate in an unhurried manner."⁴⁷⁴ Liebman goes on to articulate his "dreams" for the plaza, which include its potential use for public gatherings, concerts, and children at play. Horowitz argues that these ideas were merely Liebman's *fantasies* for the space, which were belied by the material conditions of the plaza and its lack of community events. Horowitz claims:

When we consider that in the seventeen years of the plaza's existence prior to *Tilted Arc* there were fewer than twenty public events, that other than the steps into the buildings there was no public seating, except, of course, for the lip of the fountain because the fountain was usually dry, that the plaza is a notoriously windy site, we can see that Liebman's dream was blocked not by the sculpture but the space itself. Liebman envisioned a festive, multiuse space which never existed, but for its nonexistence he blames the arc.⁴⁷⁵

Here, Horowitz points out that negativity towards the sculpture was generated by the discrepancy between the fantasies projected onto the space and the reality of the space itself. Put differently, *Tilted Arc* made manifest what was there all along, i.e., the

⁴⁷³ Ibid., p. 10, 12.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

unfulfilled potential of an actually unwelcoming space. The result of this newfound awareness about the space was that individuals focused their negativity upon the sculpture. Rather than generating conversation, debate, or even complaints about the plaza, its design, or its lack of events, *Tilted Arc* generated complaints about its own presence in an inhospitable space.

To recapitulate the last point, projected fantasies about the plaza got in the way of the reception of *Tilted Arc*. However, I argue that this claim is actually connected to one of the other central objections Horowitz deals with in his article regarding the “unsuitability” of the sculpture as a symbol for the plaza, federal building, and government. Horowitz outlines several instances in which objections focused not on the sculpture, but on what it symbolized (or failed to symbolize). Horowitz states, “Judge Edward Re of the United States Court of International Trade said that ‘this rusted steel barrier’ undermines the goals of ‘provid[ing] proper identification for the Courthouse’ and ‘generat[ing] respect for its symbol of justice.’”⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, as Dwight Ink, Acting Administrator of the GSA noted when handing down his decision about the sculpture, ““those testifying in favor of relocation regarded the Plaza and the open space it symbolized much more highly than did those who favored retention.”” Horowitz takes particular interest in Ink’s phrasing here: “not ‘the open space the plaza is’ but ‘the open space it symbolized.’”⁴⁷⁷ Horowitz argues that these objections had more to do with the plaza as a symbol of openness and “democratic accessibility” (when combined with the federal building located there) than with the sculpture itself.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

These objections are notable because of their connection with the aforementioned fantasies about the plaza.⁴⁷⁹ The “symbolic” objection was related to illusions held by some individuals regarding the openness of the space and of the government. *Tilted Arc* generated a psychic tension between the ideal of a liberal government that is open and accessible, and one that is open only as an ideal, or one that is potentially oppressive. Put another way, *Tilted Arc* brought the illusion of openness in the physical space of Federal Plaza to the fore, as well as the psychological illusion of openness and accessibility to the government itself. This recognition was the source of hostility for many individuals and it accounts for why many critiques of the sculpture retreated to the level of symbology. If *Tilted Arc* was perceived as an inadequate representation of the openness of government or the plaza that housed a federal building, it forces critical audiences to consider whether it was meant to function as a positive symbol. We must also ask deeper questions about what is being symbolized – here, the government, and more broadly, America. Specters of restriction and oppression lurk in the background of such inquiries. Even if questions about the lack of fit between illusion or fantasy and their counterparts in reality were not involved in Serra’s plans for *Tilted Arc*, the artist certainly wanted to generate discussion about the plaza, its uses, status, and relationship to the federal government. Arguably, Serra wanted to call the government’s role and beneficence into question through the installation of this sculpture and generation of discussion about it. In this way, openness of government, public debate, and taste are central to the *Tilted Arc*’s aims.

With these aims in mind, let us now consider how the debate surrounding *Tilted Arc* relates to Kantian wing clipping. As Hein comments, “Public art cannot promise

⁴⁷⁹ The positive fantasies about the plaza are intimately connected to the illusions generated as coping mechanisms to deal with the negativity and restrictiveness of plaza and government.

public understanding, any more than private art assures private salvation, whatever these might be.”⁴⁸⁰ To put Hein’s statement in Kantian terms, works of art cannot promise understanding, even as they *demand* that we respond to them in some way. As I argued in Chapter Two, responses to art in the form of judgments of taste are crucial to the cycle of production and reception. Works of art demand that we respond to them by communicating with other individuals about our judgments of taste. However, what reception these works receive is by no means guaranteed.⁴⁸¹ As Hein puts the point here, there is no guarantee that we will understand (or appreciate) particular works of art. The demand to respond is met more uncertainly as the works become more difficult to understand. In fact, works that are difficult to understand or are challenging, insofar as they make it difficult to arrive at a settled response, exacerbate the urgency of the demand to respond. For these reasons, we are silenced by the works while we attempt to make sense of them. As I have been arguing throughout the dissertation in terms of wing clipping, if works are perceived to be challenging or subversive, the publics they seek to address may silence them.

In the Serra case, the silencing took the form of the removal of the work from the plaza. A secondary silencing occurred when the ruling in favor of the work’s removal cemented its status as either a questionable work of art or an illegitimate one. After the court proceedings were concluded, the finality of the ruling and appeals process tried to settle the matter once and for all by ending discussion and debate about the work. *Tilted Arc* was not simply physically removed from its site but also “legally” silenced at this

⁴⁸⁰ Hein, p. 5.

⁴⁸¹ As Joseph Cannon argues in “Intentionality and Judgments of Taste,” it is impossible to predict our judgments about specific works of art beforehand. See Joseph Cannon. “Intentionality of Judgments of Taste in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (1) (Feb. 2008): 53-65.

point. The public questions and controversy regarding the status of the work came to a close only through the legal resolution of the case. *Tilted Arc*'s potential was removed along with the sculpture itself; it was replaced by the actuality of a censored and censored work of art that was removed (or destroyed). The finality of the proceedings limited additional discussion, further cementing its destruction.

It is important to note that Diamond, who spearheaded the campaign to remove *Tilted Arc*, attempted to silence some voices by conducting proceedings that were not fully free and open. We might characterize this as yet a third silencing that occurred as part of the *Tilted Arc* affair. Diamond "stacked the deck" by soliciting some testimony and thereby silencing those voices that were not "welcome" to his proceedings.⁴⁸² This deliberate inclusion of some voices and the exclusion of others is censorship in the clearest sense. Interestingly, Diamond might be interpreted as performing Serra's point about the illusion of the openness of government. Restricting the use of the space of Federal Plaza displayed the lack of openness of the government; Diamond's manipulation of the testimony in his favor redoubles this lack of freedom and openness. Moreover, Diamond deliberately put on a show of public deliberation and court proceedings that stood in stark contrast to the skewed process he actually conducted. The farcical nature of these proceedings exemplifies the "machinations of state power"⁴⁸³ that Serra had in mind to expose. Recall that while the GSA approved and installed *Tilted Arc*, it was also the agent of its removal and destruction. When federal authority was called into question, the government, in the form of the long arm of the GSA, moved to remove the work and

⁴⁸² Horowitz notes, "It was a quasi-democratic procedure at best, since Diamond ignored the 'polling' he himself initiated, but it was nevertheless a staged performance of democratic public deliberation over the fate of a work of public art." (p. 8)

⁴⁸³ Hein, p. 3.

stifle the debate about it. Diamond put the “performative touches” regarding governmental power upon the deal by manipulating the testimony and court proceedings.

While this silencing worked on the level of “general public deliberation,” the critical response, especially among aestheticians, continued long after *Tilted Arc* was removed from Federal Plaza. As a case in point, the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* printed a symposium in 1996 on the *Tilted Arc* affair and its implications.⁴⁸⁴ We might say then, that even excessive wing clipping may fail to completely silence a work or artist. Aestheticians have taken up *Tilted Arc* and the controversy surrounding it as a call for further reflection and judgment. In spite of the controversy that Serra endured regarding *Tilted Arc*, he has continued to make works of art on his own terms. He continues to insist upon the close connection of installation and work, claiming that his site-specific works are not complete until they are installed on their designated sites.⁴⁸⁵ Serra’s aesthetic perseverance aside, the danger involved in extreme wing clipping and silencing remains a serious threat to freedom of expression. Even if the debate about *Tilted Arc* continues today among aestheticians, other works or artists may not have the same power to inaugurate debate on a wide scale.

Still, a reconsideration of the reception of *Tilted Arc* might lead us to re-read the debate generated about the work as a mark of its success rather than of its failure, even if Serra did not anticipate the consequences of it. Hein states:

We have turned to artists in moments of distress as we formerly turned to religion, and then to science, for public enlightenment and private satisfaction. Each has stirred up its own problems and given us some gratification in return. To cite

⁴⁸⁴ See Hein, Horowitz, and Kelly in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (Winter 1996).

⁴⁸⁵ See Sam Dolnick. “Richard Serra Sculpture Rusts in Bronx Yard.” *The New York Times*. 24 September 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/26/nyregion/26serra.html>. For instance, Serra is referring to the gigantic steel plates in storage at a Bronx yard. “‘To him it really isn’t his work unless it’s installed properly,’ said Trina McKeever, Mr. Serra’s studio assistant.” See Dolnick.

Patricia Phillips's appreciation of public art: 'It is an art which is absolutely engaged with the world and this engagement often invokes spirited disagreement...Absolute consensus is not necessarily a happy state.'⁴⁸⁶

In other words, the fact that Serra's work generated so much discussion and disagreement is a sign of its success as a work of art as well as the success of the public sphere vis-à-vis its openness. Put another way, the deliberative ideal that is attached to some democracies is alive and well when debate about public works of art is allowed to flourish. This means that complete agreement may not actually be a positive sign of the health of the society, nor does it guarantee the quality of the work in question. As Kelly argues, "Discussions of public art might rather start from the recognition that complete consensus is impossible because the public comprises many different subspheres, organizations, and institutions, each with many voices in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and class [...] Instead of consensus, debate and dialogue about these representations should be the mandate in public art."⁴⁸⁷ With this multiplicity of publics and counterpublics in mind, what is successful about *Tilted Arc* is the amount of conversation and debate it generated among several groups before (and after) its removal. In the next section of argument, I return to the question of reception from the perspective of isolationist counterpublics, or what I term "cults" that seek to communicate amongst themselves about works of art that are difficult to understand and respond to, i.e., works of genius.

IV. Benjamin's Notion of Cults

In Section II, I suggested that cults might be one way to understand the isolationist function of counterpublics when they remain isolated in a strict fashion.

⁴⁸⁶ Hein, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁷ Kelly, p. 15.

Fraser refers to such groups as “enclaves.” In order to get clearer on isolationist communication, particularly with respect to aesthetic concerns, let us turn to Walter Benjamin’s sense of cult articulated in “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.” Here, Benjamin sets out a problem regarding the authenticity of the work of art in modernity. In particular, he is concerned about what he calls the loss of “aura” taking place as a result of the mechanical reproduction process. I explain Benjamin’s notions of cult value and aura in order to investigate different configurations of publics and their approaches to communication. In particular, I am interested in how cults specifically aim to communicate internally rather than to a larger group. This follows upon my critique of Fraser outlined in Section II and expands upon the isolationist sense of counterpublics. I also explore, contra Benjamin, the potential of film to generate discourses and aesthetic communities (cults) because of auracity.

The closure of distance between audience and work and a change in the conditions of reception – from attention to distraction – have thrown the art historical tradition into a crisis, according to Benjamin. Benjamin traces the history of reproduction in the arts – from replicas made by apprentices in workshops to the use of woodcuts, moveable type, engraving, etching, and lithography.⁴⁸⁸ He argues that “[i]n even the most perfect reproduction, *one* thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place.”⁴⁸⁹ For Benjamin, the “here and now of the original underlies the concept of its authenticity.”⁴⁹⁰ The work’s unique existence is intertwined with its particular ownership and reception history. Put more strongly,

⁴⁸⁸ Walter Benjamin. “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.” Third Version. In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. IV, 1938-1940*. Trans. Suhrkamp Verlag. Ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 252-253.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 253, emphasis in original.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

reception, context, and physical particularity constitute the authenticity of the work of art. Reproductions, according to Benjamin, do not possess the richness of the original work's history, context, or specificity.⁴⁹¹ Instead, as copies, they are disconnected from the history associated with the original and break the link between physical particularity and reception.

Benjamin acknowledges that technological reproduction carries some recognizable benefits:

[T]echnological reproduction is more independent of the original than is manual reproduction. For example, in photography it can bring out aspects of the original that are accessible only to the lens (which is adjustable and can easily change viewpoint) but not to the human eye; or it can use certain processes, such as enlargement or slow motion, to record images which escape natural optics altogether. [...] [T]echnological reproduction can place the copy of the original in situations which the original itself cannot attain. Above all, it enables the original to meet the recipient halfway, whether in the form of a photograph or in that of a gramophone record. The cathedral leaves its site to be received in the studio of an art lover; the choral work performed in an auditorium or in the open air is enjoyed in a private room.⁴⁹²

Here, Benjamin grants that because reproductions are more independent than originals, they may be placed in different contexts and may be manipulated in order to magnify specific details that are inaccessible to the naked eye. During the reproduction process, artists may choose to enhance or distort effects present in the original. From one point of view, these attributes may be treated as advantages of reproduction. Copies can do things and be places that the originals cannot, precisely because they are not physical

⁴⁹¹ One might argue that reproductions are also part of this historical lineage, albeit of a lesser status than the original work. I explore this point in Chapter Five during my discussion of Andy Warhol. Through the use of mass production techniques, Andy Warhol distanced himself from “authenticity” as understood by Benjamin in this article. Furthermore, Warhol problematized the notion of the singularity of artistic genius by actively enlisting the help of “The Factory” in producing silkscreened paintings. Mass production and teamwork were essential to Warhol’s creative process. I will return to this point in Chapter Five.

⁴⁹² Benjamin, p. 254.

particulars. However, instead of conceiving the ability to change the location and context of a work of art in a positive way – because it opens up new possibilities of exhibition and increases access to the work – Benjamin views reproduction in a negative light. The reproduction is divorced from the particular history and context of the work, and ultimately, from its particular tradition. Therefore, its authority and originality is in jeopardy. The greater availability and circulation of reproductions damages the auracity of the works because they are brought closer to their audiences.⁴⁹³

The aura of the work of art, according to Benjamin, is the “core [of] [...] its authenticity;” “the quintessence of all that is transmissible in it from its origin on;” and “the authority of the object.”⁴⁹⁴ The power and authority of auratic works are derived from the aforementioned history and context of the work, including its ownership and reception history, and from their physical materiality and presence here-and-now. Benjamin argues that the aura of the artwork is jeopardized in the age of technological reproduction because the object is removed from “the sphere of tradition.” In other words, when the work is freed from its context and can be transported into a variety and multiplicity of locations in ways that were closed to the original, it makes a break with the established historical tradition. The separation of the reproduction from the original work’s historical tradition in conjunction with its recontextualization causes the work to lose aura, according to Benjamin.⁴⁹⁵ As a result, the copy is viewed as a subversive

⁴⁹³ Ibid., p. 255.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 254.

⁴⁹⁵ Bürger’s arguments about the original functional context in *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* echo this aspect of Benjamin’s philosophy. This also calls to mind Danto’s argument in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* about the hostess who put a postcard of *Guernica* up on her kitchen cabinet because it is “sufficiently handsome in its gray and black harmonies” – who is completely unaware of the meaning of the work and its context. See Arthur Danto. *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 3.

element vis-à-vis that tradition rather than as a part of it. Furthermore, the proliferation of reproductions enables copies to throw off the yoke of context entirely. According to Benjamin, reproductions as a class foster a crisis in the art historical tradition and ultimately threaten to destroy that tradition altogether.⁴⁹⁶

According to Benjamin, “*the desire of present-day masses to ‘get closer’ to things spatially and humanly, and their equally passionate concern for overcoming each thing’s uniqueness [Überwindung des Einmaligen jeder Gegebenheit] by assimilating it as a reproduction*”⁴⁹⁷ fosters the crisis in auratic authenticity. This line of argument draws upon Benjamin’s notion of aura as the “unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be.”⁴⁹⁸ Although Benjamin utilizes this latter definition of aura in reference to natural objects, he seems to draw upon it when discussing the crisis brought about by reproduction technologies. The desire of contemporary audiences to get closer and closer to artworks draws upon this (natural) sense of aura, but closing the distance between the individual and the work endangers its aura because it demystifies the object. That is, proximity with the work makes it seem less foreign, more accessible, and therefore, less unique.⁴⁹⁹

For Benjamin, the modern condition is marked by the desire to “extract [...] sameness even from what is unique.”⁵⁰⁰ Rather than revering objects precisely because they are special, modern audiences want to demystify and assimilate works into themselves. This demystification is partially accomplished by separating the work from

⁴⁹⁶ Benjamin, p. 254.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 255, emphasis in original.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 255.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 255-256.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 256.

its history, mystery, and context. This is a departure from the way cult objects and works of art have historically been treated.

Originally, the embeddedness of an artwork in the context of tradition found expression in a cult. As we know, the earliest artworks originated in the service of rituals – first magical, then religious. And it is highly significant that the artwork’s auratic mode of existence is never entirely severed from its ritual function. In other words: *the unique value of the ‘authentic’ work of art has its basis in ritual, the source of its original use value.* This ritualistic basis, however mediated it may be, is still recognizable as secularized ritual in even the most profane forms of the cult of beauty.⁵⁰¹

Benjamin traces the auracity of artworks back to the usage of special objects in cults and religious sects. In these groups, objects were utilized as part of arcane rituals in the service of magic or religion. Such rituals were designed to simultaneously interest onlookers (in this case, members of the cult) as well as to mystify them by feeding the mystery surrounding the group, objects, or beliefs.⁵⁰²

Ritualistic objects were valued due to their centrality to the cult as a source of mystery, power, and knowledge. These objects functioned in a dialectical relationship to knowledge, thereby securing their cult value and significance for the group.⁵⁰³ On the one hand, revered objects played a central role in the practices and beliefs of the cult.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., p. 256, emphasis in the original.

⁵⁰² In particular, the mystery I am referring to here has to do with the source or origin of authority in the cult.

⁵⁰³ Daniel Herwitz makes a version of this point in *The Star as Icon: Celebrity in the Age of Mass Consumption* in relation to stardom. Quoting P. David Marshall, he states: “‘The film star aura was...built on a dialectic of knowledge and mystery [...] The incomplete nature of the audience’s knowledge of any screen actor became the foundation on which film celebrity was constructed into an economic force.’ My point is that this incomplete knowledge was also internal to the cinematic power of the star, internal to what *made* that person a star in film and *maintained* that aesthetic role.” While this passage deals with the relationship of knowledge and the notion of stardom, we might transfer the thought to how knowledge and mystery regarding an object function for its power in relation to cult members. The status of these objects is deeply dependent upon the dialectic of knowledge and mystery at work within this group. See Daniel Herwitz. *The Star as Icon: Celebrity in the Age of Mass Consumption*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008., p. 16. See Also P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997., p. 81-82.

These objects were crucial to the identity of the cult as well as to its system of belief. On the other hand, however, these objects were treated in a way that amplified their mystery and made them deliberately difficult to comprehend or communicate about. For this latter function to be carried out effectively, it was essential that the designated objects remain mysterious, unapproachable, and inaccessible. In other words, it was necessary for the objects' auracity to remain intact.

In the last few paragraphs, we have noted the close connection Benjamin establishes between aura and cult. In the remainder of the essay, he traces out the relationship of cult objects and works of art. To tie this back to our argument, recall that severing the work from its historical tradition damages its authenticity and aura. These are further damaged when individuals attempt to close the distance between self and work by "strip[ping] away its veil."⁵⁰⁴ According to Benjamin, in prehistoric times, absolute emphasis was placed on the "cult value" of the object, i.e., the object's role in ritual. The transition from ritualistic treatment to specifically aesthetic reception might seem puzzling at first glance, but Benjamin argues that this path of the historical transition is made possible by maintaining the cult status of the work of art.⁵⁰⁵ In other words, the treatment of objects and works as valuable, mysterious, and unapproachable reveals a similarity between cult objects and works of art. Importantly for Benjamin, this transition preserves the auracity of the cult object in the work of art. (It is for this reason

⁵⁰⁴ Benjamin adopts Nietzsche's veil imagery from *The Gay Science* when examining the auracity of works of art. See Benjamin, p. 255-256. Nietzsche argues that people with an overpowering will to truth seek to strip away the veils from everything, only to find that the answers they seek are not revealed in the process. Nietzsche goes a step further to suggest that this overpowering will to truth at any price is in bad taste. See Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974. See especially, Nietzsche's Introduction, §3. See also Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1967. See especially §15.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

that works of art can be the impetus for the formation of aesthetic communities that are similar to Benjamin's cults. I will return to this point momentarily.)

The cult value of works of art is derived from the special treatment of unique objects by a particular group. Their inaccessibility to a general public helped to confer their sacred status.

Cult value as such tends today, it would seem, to keep the artwork out of sight: certain statues of gods are accessible only to the priest in the cella; certain images of the Madonna remain covered nearly all year round; certain sculptures on medieval cathedrals are not visible to the viewer at ground level. *With the emancipation of specific artistic practices from the service of ritual, the opportunities for exhibiting their products increase.*⁵⁰⁶

Benjamin argues that during earlier eras, emphasis was placed upon the cult value of works. Limiting access to these unique objects was essential to establishing their status, mystery, and significance for these groups. In more contemporary times, on the other hand, the emphasis is placed upon the exhibition value of works.⁵⁰⁷ For Benjamin, the move to and embrace of exhibition value results in: 1) the treatment of cult objects as works of art rather than as instruments in rituals, and 2) the destruction of aura. First, the detachment of sacred objects from their cults makes the move to treat them as works of art possible. Releasing sacred objects from their ritualistic roles makes greater access to them possible; exhibition possibilities open up that were formerly closed.⁵⁰⁸ Persons who previously had no access to these objects were able to view and experience them for the first time. As such, the treatment of revered objects as works of art brings the potential for commercialization along with the embrace of exhibition value, detaches the object

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 257, emphasis in original.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 257.

⁵⁰⁸ The opening of exhibition possibilities may be viewed as a positive aspect of the reproduction process, rather a negative one, as does Benjamin. Because a greater number of individuals may participate in reception, a potentially greater number of individuals may appreciate the beauty of the object or work.

from the cult, and leads to the loss of aura. The mysterious or sacred dimension of these objects was diminished in part because of their greater accessibility. Moreover, the move towards commercialization spurred people to treat the objects as commodities rather than as an essential part of their religious or sacred lives.

Benjamin argues, however, that “cult value does not give way without resistance. It falls back to a last retrenchment: the human countenance.”⁵⁰⁹ In order to illustrate his point, Benjamin argues that photography and film technology benefited from and perhaps even exploited the human countenance and its connection to aura. Benjamin states:

It is no accident that the portrait is central to early photography. In the cult of remembrance of dead or absent loved ones, the cult value of the image finds its last refuge. In the fleeting expression of the human face, the aura beckons from early photographs for the last time. This is what gives them their melancholy and incomparable beauty. But as the human being withdraws from the photographic image, exhibition value for the first time shows its superiority to cult value.⁵¹⁰

Although technological reproduction allows for the transmission of the semblance of aura during early portrait photography, Benjamin argues that it ultimately leads to the destruction of the aura. As aforementioned, technological reproduction decreases the distance between individual and work; as a result, the “unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be,”⁵¹¹ is diminished. For Benjamin, technological reproduction undermines the authority and dominance of cult value and supplants it with exhibition value. This is because the increased potential for exhibition undermines the secretive nature of the cult by making these objects and works more public.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁹ Benjamin, p. 257.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., p. 257-258.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., p. 255.

⁵¹² This situation has implications for the autonomy of art. As exhibition value eclipses cult value, according to Benjamin, art’s autonomy “disappear[s] forever.” See p. 258. There is a long historical tradition that distinguishes between “pure” and “mercenary” art that traces back to Kant’s *Critique of*

According to Benjamin, the aesthetic crisis spurred by technological reproduction is compounded by the change in conditions of reception caused by the development of means of mechanical reproduction. For Benjamin this means a change from more individualized absorbed contemplation to a mass reception in distraction.⁵¹³ Whereas “traditional” arts such as painting, sculpture, and theatrical performance make uninterrupted contemplation possible, “contemporary” arts promote inattentive reception.⁵¹⁴ In particular, Benjamin argues that film images prevent contemplation from taking place due to a scattering or shattering of focus. Intercutting, music, and various “shock effects” call attention to the technical aspects of filmmaking being employed and therefore distract from the work as a whole. Put another way, according to Benjamin, film highlights fragmentation of parts rather than unification of the work. He states, “*Reception in distraction – the sort of reception which is increasingly noticeable in all areas of art and is a symptom of profound changes in apperception – finds in film its true training ground. Film, by virtue of its shock effects, is predisposed to this form of reception. It makes cult value recede into the background...*”⁵¹⁵

To highlight this point, Benjamin argues: “Distraction and concentration form an antithesis, which must be formulated as follows. A person who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it; he enters into the work, just as, according to legend a Chinese painter entered his completed painting while beholding it. By contrast, the distracted masses absorb the work of art into themselves.”⁵¹⁶

Judgment. See Immanuel Kant. *The Critique of Judgment.* Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, §43.

⁵¹³ Benjamin, p. 264.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p. 267.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., p. 269, emphasis in original.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., p. 268.

I argue that this isn't the only mode of reception open to contemporary audiences. As Brecht argues in relation to epic theater, the model of reception that we ought to emulate involves concentration and rapt attention, not distraction.⁵¹⁷ Using the possibility of this type of reception as my basis, I argue that cults can form around shared interest in aesthetic experiences coupled with the desire to communicate about them with others. This type of collective reception carves out space for attention to and communication about the work that doesn't threaten to fully unveil or absorb it into the masses, but instead, maintains the work's revered status in the cult. I will return to this point momentarily, after a brief aside about Benjamin's conception of the last "refuge" for aura and cult value.

Benjamin recognizes the persistence of cult value in relation to the movie star or icon, but he simultaneously claims it has a mere shadow of its former worth. According to Benjamin, the aspect of authenticity internal to cults has disappeared. The cult of the movie star is based upon the creation of a star persona that will serve the economic interests of the movie studio in question. In other words, the last remnant of cult value is turned towards the ends of exhibition value.

Film responds to the shriveling of the aura by artificially building up the 'personality' outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves that magic of the personality which has long been no more than the putrid magic of its own commodity character. So long as moviemakers' capital sets the fashion, as a rule the only revolutionary merit that can be ascribed to today's cinema is the promotion of a revolutionary criticism of traditional concepts of art.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁷ Bertolt Brecht. *Brecht on Film and Radio*. Trans. Marc Silberman. London, UK: Methuen, 2000., p. 33-35.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

In other words, the authenticity of the individual actor is lost due to the manipulation in the service of financial gain enacted by the Studio's media machine. What remains is "the putrid magic" of commodification rather than the mysterious authenticity and auracity of the individual. The accessibility of images that is made possible by the reproduction process in conjunction with their commodification taints the objects for Benjamin. Commodification and exhibition damage whatever semblance of auratic presence may remain in the work. Instead of attributing any remaining auracity to the agency of the movie star, Benjamin discusses the artificiality the promotion process. He argues that studios manufacture a personality to build a cult around – purely in the service of making money for themselves – with little or no regard for the work of art. When individuals focus upon the aura present in such works, cults may form.

Benjamin states, "for the first time – and this is the effect of film – the human being [actor] is placed in a position where he must operate with his whole living person, while foregoing his aura. For the aura is bound to his presence in the here and now. There is no facsimile of the aura."⁵¹⁹ In films, actors perform several different takes that can be edited together to compose a single performance, a technique that further dispels the aura of the actor because it fragments what once was an organic whole (as in a theatrical performance). Because the director can create a composite performance from the selection of different takes, the singularity and wholeness of the performance (and the work) is subverted. Furthermore, Benjamin argues that technological effects such as the close up, tracking shot, reaction shot, fade, shot-reverse-shot, etc., distance the audience from the performance even more by changing our focus to the technology that makes the

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., p. 260.

work possible. Benjamin ultimately claims that film is incompatible with cult value and aura because film actors do not have the benefit of a live audience, but instead perform for a camera.

In my view, however, there remain two contemporary vestiges of cults: 1) the cult of the movie star / icon, and 2) the aesthetic cults that form based upon shared interest in specific aesthetic experiences. In both of these situations, a modicum of aura is preserved. In the first case, as outlined above, Benjamin denies the connection of film star and aura by arguing that the aura has already been destroyed because of the commercialization and marketing of the star as just another commodity. This is what Benjamin refers to as the “putrid magic” of the film star.⁵²⁰ In Chapter Five, I pick up on this thread of argumentation in relationship to the work of Andy Warhol and the cult or subculture of individuals who fostered its production and reception.⁵²¹ For now, I take the Bazinian perspective to argue that the authenticity and aura of some actors (icons) is indeed transmitted in their films. In other words, instead of just the character or role, arguably, the actress *herself* shines through in a mysterious way.

As Bazin states, “The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the

⁵²⁰ Benjamin, p. 261. While the issue of auracity in connection with film stars and icons is extremely interesting, it is not my primary focus in this chapter. For an in-depth exploration of the issue of film stars and auracity, see Daniel Herwitz’s *The Star as Icon: Celebrity in the Age of Mass Consumption*.

⁵²¹ In terms of iconography, Warhol devotes several paintings to Marilyn, Jackie, Liz Taylor, Elvis, and Marlon Brando, among others. In particular, Warhol treats these female figures in a complicated way that is both loving and sympathetic, by recognizing their conflicted natures as icons – glorifying their beauty and charisma while simultaneously recognizing their pain, tragedy, or destruction. Arguably, in this complex treatment, Warhol deals with the Benjamin’s notion of “putrid magic.”

reproduction; it *is* the model.”⁵²² In virtue of the technology that engendered it, the photographic or cinematic image becomes— or even *is* —“the real thing,” according to Bazin. While he does not explicitly use the concept of aura in this passage, Bazin’s view of images as more than mere representations suggests that something auratic is transmitted through photography and film. Not only do photography and cinema offer a realism that was lost to painting over time, but according to Bazin, they also affect us in the way that beautiful nature does.⁵²³ This effect is due to the auracity of these works.

Contra Benjamin, there is an additional manner in which cult and cult value survive in the contemporary moment. While Benjamin highlights the aura-destroying aspects of technological reproduction, it is possible to view reproductive technology as offering up the potential for community building.⁵²⁴ I propose an alternative reading of cult in which authenticity and auracity are the impetus for community formation. When individuals and groups seek to communicate about aesthetic experiences that challenge or confound them in some way, aesthetic cults may form. Rather than having a cult that draws upon the ritualistic use of mysterious objects, these types of cult form based upon the desire to communicate about confounding experiences, particularly aesthetic ones. In this way, cults may form around works of art or artists of various sorts.

Picking up on the Kantian line of argument from Chapter Two, it is possible that individuals may gather together to communicate about aesthetic experiences that are difficult to cognize, namely, experiences of works of genius. In such cases, in spite of the difficulties involved (lacking a concept by which to make sense of or unify the

⁵²² André Bazin. “The Ontology of the Photographic Image.” In *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1. Trans. Hugh Gray. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967., p. 14, emphasis in the original.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, p. 13. In this connection, Bazin mentions flowers and snowflakes.

⁵²⁴ Benjamin admits as much at the end of his essay with respect to fascism. See Benjamin, p. 269.

experience), individuals try to communicate their experiences and judgments of taste to one another. This struggle to communicate draws upon and sustains the dialectical relationship of mystery and knowledge outlined above in relation to Benjamin's cults. Rather than viewing the mysteriousness and difficulty of works of genius as a sufficient reason *not* to communicate about them, I consider their difficulty and mysteriousness a primary reason why cults attempt to communicate about them with one another. Individuals want to exchange their reactions to and judgments about works of art with one another, especially when they are extremely difficult to understand.

Recognizing the difficulty involved in such an undertaking, it is important to note that the goal of communicating about difficult works of art is not adopted by everyone. Some works seem so confounding that audience members do not wish to devote more time to trying to figure them out. At times, the difficulty of the works turns into a reason to dislike them, especially if individuals get the impression that the works do not have much of a point.⁵²⁵ It follows that only some individuals choose to become cult members – whether of a particular work or a particular artist, broadly construed.⁵²⁶ These individuals isolate themselves into a community of their own where they can communicate with other like-minded individuals about their selected artists and works. With this in mind, we must rethink Benjamin's views on reception. If individuals try to make sense of difficult works of art in community with one another, we must suppose that their desire and attempt to grapple with them implies attention rather than distraction.

⁵²⁵ See David Foster Wallace. "David Lynch Keeps His Head." In *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1997., p. 170-171.

⁵²⁶ I include all manner of artists within this group – visual artists, painters, sculptors, musicians, composers, filmmakers, mixed media artists, and liminal artists whose medium is difficult to classify. Because of the placement of this argument in connection with Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility" essay, it is crucial to expand the concept of "artist" to cover more media here.

For aesthetic cults, this may even involve experiencing (viewing, listening to, etc.) the same work on more than one occasion and then trying to think through their experiences in community with a group. Repetition in the experience of art, in conjunction with critical engagement and communication, requires the sort of rapt attention advocated by Brecht.

This particular mode of reception marks out the cult as distinct from the general public. Because members of the aesthetic cult are interested in communication about these difficult works and artists, they are a self-selecting lot who respond affirmatively to the demand posed by the works and artists in question. They certainly do not exemplify the “norm” of general reception. Even if we concede, in accord with Benjamin, that attentive reception is not the norm, this does not rule out the *possibility* for contemporary audiences to be attentive.⁵²⁷ Attention may simply require a social supplement, in other words, aesthetic cult formation. I also acknowledge that cults are not part of the general public because they express ideas that are difficult to communicate about with others. As a result, the central public sometimes marginalizes their ideas.

While cults may appear to be silent groups from perspectives outside them, they are actually characterized by internal communication about their shared interests. From the outside, the group may appear to be silent because members are not attempting to communicate with those external to the cult. To return to Fraser’s formulation of the enclave, cults seek only to communicate amongst themselves; they exhibit or exemplify internal communication that does not address the central public.⁵²⁸ Recall that this is

⁵²⁷ To an extent, I am in agreement with Benjamin on this point. Attentive reception is a relatively rare occurrence. However, it is important to recognize its possibility and essentiality for aesthetic cults and their internal communication.

⁵²⁸ Asen, p. 429. See also Felski, p. 168.

what Fraser calls the “isolationist” mode of counterpublics.⁵²⁹ Aesthetic cults try to come to terms with a work or artist in community with others insofar as those others share their withdrawal from the general public. For this reason, cults are often rather small groups of people. But this still involves expressing and exchanging judgments of taste with other people.

Here again, we must note a further connection between works of genius and the foci of aesthetic cults. Because works of genius are so difficult to communicate about, they maintain some of the mystery associated with objects utilized in cult rituals. The crucial difference regards the desire to know and communicate about the work of art more deeply. The dialectical relationship between knowledge and mystery vis-à-vis the cult object is central to its significance and power for the cult in question. So too, the aesthetic cult adopts a similar stance towards their works and artists of choice. Cults must strike a delicate balance between the desire to understand the work and artist more deeply and the effort to preserve its status as a revered object or person of shared significance. This is a very precarious dance – if one prods too much, the mystery and value could be jeopardized. Because the artist or work is so valuable, it is also in danger of being damaged if one strips away too many veils.⁵³⁰ From a Kantian perspective, cult members demand agreement not, or not only, in matters of knowledge about but in matters regarding their judgments of taste about their favored artists and works. This demand can have deeper implications for the membership of the cult. Disagreement with or denunciation of the work or artist in question on too many occasions may be grounds for the expulsion of a member from the cult. If several members of the cult express such

⁵²⁹ Fraser, p. 67-68.

⁵³⁰ Recall the Benjaminian and Nietzschean image of stripping away veils in pursuit of knowledge about an object.

judgments, it could alternatively cause the splintering of the cult into yet smaller groups or cults.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have established the distinction between publics, counterpublics, and cults in terms of the type and direction of the communication of the group in question. Counterpublics, in particular, are capable of communicating internally, in an isolationist fashion, and externally, in a publicist fashion. Often these groups alternate between both modes of communication in order to preserve their identities and expressions as constituting valuable contributions to culture. However, when such identities and expressions are put under pressure, they may deliberately choose to isolate themselves in order to guard against their marginalization or exclusion.

As an example of such exclusion, I examined the controversy surrounding *Tilted Arc* and how its removal from its site constitutes a case of extreme wing clipping. The silencing was actually two-fold: not only was the work removed, and thereby silenced, but the public debate about *Tilted Arc*'s status and legitimacy was also brought to a close when the work was taken from the plaza. This case demonstrated that even extreme wing clipping can prove unable to fully silence works of art the debates regarding them. The controversy also helped to illustrate the stakes of the exclusion of aesthetic expression, even when governmental authorities approved the art in advance. In part, my reading of these events works on a general level regarding the censorship of art that challenges the status quo or authorities in question. In a more specific way, my interpretation regards the difficulty of responding to works of genius and how these works and artists may be silenced by the publics they aim to address.

From there, I examined Benjamin's notions of cult, cult value, and aura in order to investigate different configurations of publics and their approaches to communication. In particular, I investigated how cults specifically aim to communicate internally rather than to a larger group. Cults may start out by defining themselves in a position counter to the public, as counterpublics do, but then desire to keep to their own community afterwards. While Fraser calls this "separatism," I argued that we could also understand it as a strict version of the isolationism exhibited by some counterpublics. I also explored the potential of film to generate discourses and aesthetic communities (cults) because of auracity. In the next chapter, I continue this line of argument through the exploration of how cults function in relation to the work of Andy Warhol, Gordon Matta-Clark, and David Lynch. In addition, I introduce the notion of subcultures as a foil for cults and another way to understand Kantian wing clipping and its impact upon works of genius.

Chapter Five

Cults and Subcultures

I. Introduction

In Chapter Four, I introduced cults as the analogue to Fraser's notion of isolationist counterpublics. Contrary to Fraser, I argued that not all groups aim to communicate with increasingly larger publics, meaning that isolationism or internal communication can be more than merely a stage in the dialectical movement of counterpublics. I argued that although communication with those external to the group may be the goal of *some* counterpublics, this aim does not adequately characterize *all* counterpublics. Some groups focus upon internal communication and talk amongst themselves rather than aiming their communication towards a larger group or public. This is especially true if the mainstream public proves to be hostile to isolationist-counterpublic expressions. Utilizing Benjamin's notion of cults, I explored how such groups function apart from mainstream culture while maintaining meaningful communication within their group, particularly if that group shares an aesthetic interest.

As illustrated in Chapter Four, it is possible for cults or internally communicating groups to exist and function apart from the mainstream public. In this chapter, I investigate another possibility. What if groups exist in which internal communication takes place, but where individuals are *open to the possibility* of publicist communication, i.e., of communicating with the culture from which they exited willingly or were ejected from unwillingly? That is to say, what if some groups do not embrace their isolationist status in the way that cults of the Benjaminian variety might, but instead, interact with or direct their communication towards mainstream culture? In order to address such

questions, I explore the notion of *subculture*. I argue that subcultures can be connected to mainstream culture in a variety of ways ranging from actively seeking reintegration to engaging with or critiquing mainstream culture while maintaining some distance to being minimally open to the possibility of communicating with mainstream culture. I explore the comparison of subcultures and cults in order to determine what subcultures add to the ongoing analysis of expression under pressure of restriction. While cults may appear from the outside to be silent, subcultures may appear to speak, but the meaning of the expression is not understood by culture. In this way, subcultures may be understood to occupy an intermediate position between cults and culture based upon the direction and type of communication they utilize.

As the final move of the chapter, I explore the connection of restricted or excluded expression (works of genius whose wings have been clipped by taste and culture) with cults and subcultures. Here, I return to the artists introduced in Chapter One – Andy Warhol, Gordon Matta-Clark, and David Lynch – in order to unite wing clipping and restriction on expression with the processes of community or group formation. As I argued in Chapter Four, restriction on expression can be the impetus for establishment, consolidation, and unification of aesthetic communities. Here, I explore the reception of three ingenious artists and the cults and subcultures that grew up in response to their works. This moment of argumentation will illuminate silence and silencing in relation to the formation of aesthetic communities.

II. Subculture

A. A Return to Culture

In order to define subcultures, it is important to return to our working definition of culture from Chapter Two. As I articulated the term there, culture is that set of customs, practices, mores, traditions, and ways of life particular to a group of people. Culture unites group members through the shared perspectives and habits they develop through living together. Often the commonalities are linguistic, moral, and aesthetic in nature. Culture can also refer to those individuals who possess it; one can be a “cultured” or “civilized” person. This is slightly different from the sense articulated above, in that it signifies the development of higher motivations, purposes, and tastes that are not based upon mere need, desire, or natural inclination. This sense of culture is important because it highlights the notion of civilization through a contrast with that which is “natural,” “untrained,” or “unrefined.” As we explore the notion of subcultures and their use of style as a form of critique, the sense of “refinement” will become especially important. In particular, the use of style and appearances as a way to refuse cultural norms is crucial to understanding of subculture. I will return to this point momentarily.

In addition to the definitions of culture provided above, let us consider one provided by Dick Hebdige in *Subcultures: The Meaning of Style*. In this work, Hebdige provides an anthropological definition of culture that he adopts from Raymond Williams’ *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*: “[Culture is a] particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behavior. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a

particular culture.”⁵³¹ This notion of culture is crucial to the analysis of subcultures, because of its emphasis upon institutions and norms of “ordinary behavior.” In other words, Williams’ definition articulates the normative dimension of culture, as that which wields the power to legitimate certain acts and values as authoritative and to make these the *expectation*. In what follows, I argue that subcultures, in addition to presenting a contrast to culture, often critique culture’s legitimacy and authority through behavior and style. I argue that subcultures occupy a variety of attitudes towards communication with normative culture – from openness to active engagement to critique. Subcultures attempt to show that their values and expressions make a significant contribution to culture, and thus, that their communities have been illegitimately excluded from it. In other words, subcultures attempt to reimagine and reconfigure the normative structure of society.

B. Subculture: Communication and Goals

In contrast to cults, which focus upon internal communication within their separate group, subcultures may express a range of attitudes towards expression. At a minimum, subcultures are open to the possibility of communication with mainstream culture even though they exist apart from and in contrast to it. This openness to communication is often based upon the desire to rejoin mainstream culture at some point. Here, we already move from openness to communication with mainstream culture to the desire to communicate with it in order to change it in some way. As Fraser frames the point, reintegration into mainstream culture hinges upon the ability to make manifest the fact that the expressions and identities sequestered into the subculture are not only

⁵³¹ Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Methuen, 1979., p. 6. See also Raymond Williams. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

acceptable, but also that they matter to culture because they are and always were legitimate and valuable contributions to it. Hence, openness to communication on the part of subcultures is related to mainstream culture's willingness to make room for their identities and expressions.

If cultures are to make space for subcultural expressions and identities, subcultures must demonstrate their value to mainstream culture and show that the means by which they were excluded were not legitimate or were wrongly motivated by the status quo (e.g., the desire to secure political standing by excluding those groups, identities, or expressions that pose a threat to maintenance of power). So, we might say that subcultures have two options: either they attempt to show that their members and expressions were unjustly ousted from culture or they aim to show that they constitute legitimate and valuable additions to culture that enrich rather than undermine it. Both of these avenues are related to Fraser's notion of publicist counterpublics that earnestly seek to reintegrate into culture. These groups "function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment [...] [but] they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides."⁵³² Here, subcultures might be understood as not only open to the possibility of communication, but as actively seeking to communicate in order to persuade mainstream culture about their value to it through agitation, i.e., drawing attention to itself or its identities, or through critique. As Felski

⁵³² Nancy Fraser. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80., p. 68.

frames the point, these groups seek to “convince society as a whole of the validity of [their] [...] claims.”⁵³³

This openness to communication, coupled with the attempt to convince mainstream culture of the value of a different point of view is related to the overarching subcultural goal of critique. Because individuals or groups that later emerge as subcultures cannot find acceptance within culture – or are even actively excluded from it – they critique culture’s shortcomings and what its norms do not account for. This critique could be accomplished through argumentation and political agitation on the part of individuals and groups, as highlighted by Fraser and Felski. Alternatively, critique of culture could be approached more obliquely through style, behavior, and signs. Because some of these critiques are rather assaultive, they may appear to be quite direct because of our inability to turn away from their in-your-face criticisms of culture. However, critique through style is a sort of indirect or oblique communication that is not always understood by the mainstream culture it aims to address. I will return to this point momentarily.

Hebdige focuses upon stylistic critique in *Subculture*, where he argues that subcultures are groups that display their critique of culture through style, behavior, signs, and symbols. By showing what culture’s norms do not include or accept as legitimate expressions or identities, subcultures manifest their refusal of the dominant societal norms by which such exclusions were made possible. Because cultures often proceed by “winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes *appears* both

⁵³³ Rita Felski. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989., p. 168. See also Robert Asen. “Seeking the ‘Counter’ in Counterpublics. *Communication Theory* 10 (4) (November 2000): 424-446., p. 429, emphasis in original.

legitimate and natural,”⁵³⁴ the work of stylized subcultures is to disturb such appearances. They both criticize culture for not allowing their modes of expression and identity proper hearing and also try to undermine the authority and legitimacy of culture by executing their critique in a very public fashion. As Hebdige articulates the point, subcultures are a form of critique, but especially, a form of *refusal* of culture’s norms of expression and behavior.⁵³⁵ This refusal of norms challenges the cultural authorities that prescribed and sought to normalize them in the first place.⁵³⁶ Thus, subcultures not only critique the hegemonic structure of culture in terms of what counts as “normal” and “authoritative,” they simultaneously combat it by providing alternatives. Subcultures supply their own sense of normativity and displace the norms and values provided by culture.

Hebdige argues that subcultural critique of culture is articulated indirectly:

“[T]he challenge to hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued directly by them. Rather, it is expressed obliquely, in style. The objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed (and, as we shall see, ‘magically resolved’) at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is, at the level of signs.”⁵³⁷ While Hebdige refers to style and signs as an oblique method of critique, it is nonetheless a powerful method. The fact that subcultures perform their critique, in part, through appearances, does not mean that the critique is itself superficial. Rather, as Hebdige notes towards the end of this passage, subcultures address others through signs and symbols because they are one way to control meaning and signification. He argues, “The struggle between different discourses, different definitions and meanings within ideology is therefore always, at the same time,

⁵³⁴ Hebdige, p. 14., emphasis mine. See also Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds. *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. New York: Routledge, 1975.

⁵³⁵ Hebdige, p. 3, p. 18.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

a struggle within signification: a struggle for possession of the sign which extends to even the most mundane areas of everyday life.”⁵³⁸ Signs, understood here to include style and appearances, are a powerful means of resistance to and critique of dominant culture.⁵³⁹

Stylistic resistance is powerful because of how it manifests an alternative vision of what might be included within culture – and thereby points out what is currently missing or excluded from culture. As Hebdige puts the point:

The meaning of subculture is, then, always in dispute, and style is the area in which the opposing definitions clash with most dramatic force [...] [T]his process begins with a crime against the natural order, though in this case the deviation may seem slight indeed – the cultivation of a quaff, the acquisition of a scooter or a record or a certain type of suit. But it ends in the construction of a style, in a gesture of defiance or contempt, in a smile or a sneer. It signals a Refusal. I would like to think that this Refusal is worth making, that these gestures have a meaning, that the smiles and the sneers have some subversive value...⁵⁴⁰

Here, Hebdige points out that subcultures both refuse the norms of dominant culture and also present a different set of norms and values that might be accepted in their stead.

Returning to Wittgenstein’s notion of language as a way of life, we might say that the

⁵³⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

⁵³⁹ In some cases, this means that subcultures take signs from dominant culture and reinterpret them to serve their own ends. That is, they appropriate signs of power or significance from within culture and utilize them in a different way – sometimes at counterpurposes to the original use – in order to reveal a new meaning, make a critical point, or to undermine the authority that deemed these signs to be legitimate in the first place. This is accomplished by placing the object or sign in another context or by altering it in some significant way. “Turning the sign,” or “détournement,” was a strategy utilized by the Situationists to critique society and to open up new ways of thinking and meaning. According to Sadie Plant, détournement “characterized the upsetting of relationships with people, cities, and ideas with games, *dérives*, and constructed situations. *Détournement* became the ‘signature of the situationist movement, the sign of its presence and contestation in contemporary cultural reality,’ and was ultimately the sense in which the situationists conceived the social revolution: a gigantic turning around of the existing social world.” See Sadie Plant. *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. New York: Routledge, 1992., p. 89, emphasis in original. *Dérive* is a French term that is usually translated as “drift.” The Situationists used *dérives* as a way to drift through and explore their surroundings, and in particular, urban landscapes. The experimental technique was meant to bring individuals closer to their environments in an authentic way. According to Guy Debord, the *dérive* is “a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances.” See Guy Debord. *Internationale Situationniste* 1 (June 1958). See also “Détournement as Negation and Prelude.” In *Internationale Situationniste* 3 (Dec. 1959). See also Ken Knabb, ed. *Situationist International Anthology*. Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981., p.55.

⁵⁴⁰ Hebdige, p. 3.

subcultural critique of culture is enmeshed with considerations of what ought to be valued in culture and what is currently excluded from it by mainstream culture.

Hebdige argues, “Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance. Its transformations go ‘against nature,’ interrupting the process of ‘normalization.’ As such, they are gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the ‘silent majority,’ which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus.”⁵⁴¹ The very existence of subcultures indicates that society or ‘the public’ is not homogeneous.⁵⁴² Thus, one goal of subcultural criticism is to manifest the restrictedness of culture and what has been excluded from it as well as to point out what it ought to include. However, as we shall see shortly, these critiques are not always understood by mainstream culture because of their subtlety or brashness. As a result, these expressions are sometimes treated as if they make no sense, or as if they are merely “noise.” This treatment can be based on genuine misunderstanding, or upon a willful rejection of the critiques subcultures aim to convey. Thus, the treatment of subcultural expression as a kind of “noise” is a way to disarm the critique or not to take it seriously. Yet, another cultural strategy for dealing with subcultural expression may be to defuse its critique by appropriating subcultural style and behavior. In the next section, I examine each of these strategies in turn.

1. Two Strategies for Cultural Response

Subcultures present us with an interesting picture of groups that exhibit a desire both to communicate with mainstream culture and to criticize, resist, or undermine it.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁵⁴² Fraser, p. 64.

The subcultural goals of communication and subversion may be in tension with each other. Resistance or subversion on the part of subcultures may, in turn, be met with resistance and suspicion on the part of culture. In other words, the subcultural critique may not be warmly received, if it is understood and received at all. Subcultures sometimes aim to unravel the comfort that culture has cultivated over time – resisting and potentially strongly repudiating culture through style and behavior in response to their exclusions (perceived or actual). The stylistic resistance displayed in subculture can approach the level of assault with its critiques, and therefore, is often met with similar levels of hostility or rejection by mainstream culture. According to Hebdige, the mainstream cultural response often takes two forms: “(1) the conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass-produced objects (i.e. the commodity form); (2) the labeling and re-definition of deviant behavior by dominant groups - the police, the media, the judiciary (i.e. the ideological form).”⁵⁴³ The first form of response is unexpected – subcultural critique is defused by making its expressions seem less subversive by making them seem more common and safe. I will deal with each of these techniques in turn, beginning with the “re-definition” of subcultural expression as “noise” or “interference” and proceeding to discuss the recuperation or co-optation of subcultural style through commodification.

**a. Noise, Opacity, and Interference:
Disarmament Through Interpretive Devaluation**

Unlike cults, whose internal communication appears to be silence from the outside, subcultures may appear to the mainstream to express a kind of “noise,”

⁵⁴³ Hebdige, p. 94.

“interference,” “blankness,” or “opacity.” All of these descriptions of subcultural expression convey a recognition that meaning making is taking place within these groups, but that the meaning is not understood by all. As Hebdige puts the point, “Subcultures represent ‘noise’ (as opposed to sound): interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media. We should therefore not underestimate the spectacular subculture not only as a metaphor for potential anarchy ‘out there’ but as an actual mechanism of semantic disorder: a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation.”⁵⁴⁴ Dominant culture seeks to defuse the subversive power of subcultural critique by treating it as something that does not speak or mean on its own terms, but merely interrupts the meaning making of mainstream culture. This devalues subculture’s critique.

However, while subcultures may seem to proceed in a “noisy” fashion that does not make any sense, their stylistic critiques can actually be quite deliberate and orderly. As Hebdige points out, subcultures attempt “through perturbation and deformation to disrupt and reorganize meaning.”⁵⁴⁵ When the style in question is particularly assaultive – such as punk outfits involving “T-shirts covered in swear words”⁵⁴⁶ and “the most unremarkable and inappropriate items – a pin, a plastic clothes peg, a television component, a razor blade, a tampon”⁵⁴⁷ – it may not outwardly appear to present a critique, even if it is, from the perspective of its creators, a carefully articulated message of refusal. In punk subculture we see an active rejection of this value, but, as aggressive

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 90. See also Hall. My own caveat here is that subcultures do not “represent” noise. On the contrary, subcultures are *treated* as if they do not express themselves intelligibly, but only interrupt the meaning making of others within culture. Instead of a “representation” of noise, I would like to substitute “interpretation” as a kind of noise by cultural authorities.

⁵⁴⁵ Hebdige, p. 106.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 106.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 107.

as punk style could be, it was quite refined in its own way. In fact, punk stylistic choices are the cultivated rejection of the norms of culture. Punks utilized chaotic appearances in order to systematically critique culture and what was included or represented in it.⁵⁴⁸

Hebdige states, “We could go further and say that even if poverty was being parodied, the wit was undeniably barbed; that beneath the clownish make-up there lurked the unaccepted and disfigured face of capitalism; that beyond the horror circus antics a divided and unequal society was being eloquently condemned.”⁵⁴⁹

Because of their shocking tactics, punks were commonly misunderstood by mainstream culture. As aforementioned, interpretations ranged from “blank” to “opaque” to “noise.” However, none of these ways of seeing recognized or gave credit to the criticism leveled by punk subculture; they merely dismissed it as nonsensical. Hebdige states, “Notions concerning the sanctity of language are intimately bound up with ideas of social order. The limits of acceptable linguistic expression are prescribed by a number of apparently universal taboos. These taboos guarantee the continuing ‘transparency’ (the taken-for-grantedness) of meaning.”⁵⁵⁰ The methodical transgression of social order through style suggests that punks may have deliberately presented their critique in ways that could be misunderstood by others. In other words, punks refused traditional meaning making by expressing themselves in assaultive ways.

Insofar as punks were refusing culture and its norms, they may not have wanted fully open communication with culture. In other words, perhaps punks wanted to remain incomprehensible. Hebdige states, “punks dislocated themselves from the parent culture

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 113.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 115.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 91.

and were positioned instead on the outside: beyond the comprehension of the average (wo)man in the street in a science fiction future. They played up their Otherness, ‘happening on the world as aliens, inscrutables.’⁵⁵¹ In this sense, punks wanted to display their difference from culture even if what this difference meant or amounted to was not clear to outsiders. The refusal of (traditional) meaning making is itself a kind of meaning making; however, this meaning typically remains unperceived by mainstream culture. Often, the punk refusal to be labeled and positioned by culture was interpreted as aggressive, nonsensical, noisy, or even blank by mainstream culture.

In the case of the mods, a British working class subculture obsessed with the minutiae of style, the critique was difficult to detect because of its subtlety.⁵⁵² We might say that their criticism was hidden in plain sight – because it was felt but not fully understood. Arguably, this means that mod subculture was treated as a kind of background noise. Hebdige states:

‘[T]here was something in the way they moved which adults couldn’t make out; some intangible detail (a polished upper, the brand of a cigarette, the way a tie was knotted) which seemed strangely out of place in the office or the classroom. Somewhere on the way home from school or work, the mods went ‘missing’: they were absorbed into a ‘noonday underground’ of cellar clubs, discotheques, boutiques and record shops which lay hidden beneath the ‘straight world’ against which it was ostensibly defined.⁵⁵³

So even though the mods were visible as a working-class group within or alongside of mainstream culture, the precise meaning of their difference was not clear. Perhaps this misinterpretation of mods is based upon their extremely orderly and refined appearance.

In contrast to the punks who clearly did not fit into mainstream culture with their

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., p. 120-121.

⁵⁵² Ibid., p. 52.

⁵⁵³ Hebdige, p. 52-53. The imbedded quotes are from Thomas Wolfe. *The Pump House Gang*. London, UK: Bantam Publishing, 1969.

blatantly assaultive style, the mods at least *appeared* to fit in *because* of their refinement. Mods participated in the “straight world” by day, “quietly disrupting the orderly sequence which leads from signifier to signified, [...] [and] undermin[ing] the conventional meaning of ‘collar, suit and tie,’ pushing neatness to the point of absurdity.”⁵⁵⁴ The group fetishized fashion as a means to critique the dysfunctional consumer culture and the class system they saw at work in Great Britain at the time. The extreme cultivation of style was an indication of the mods’ lack of fit in culture. However, the relative “quietness” of the mods’ critique of culture made it difficult to discern what their goals were.

The two interpretations of subcultural expression presented above through the analysis of mod and punk – as “noise” or “opacity” – complicates how we understand subcultures and their goals. Both mods and punks displayed a resistance to communication that is in tension with their desire to speak. The refusal to be positioned by mainstream culture leads to expressions and styles that are deliberately difficult to contextualize and understand. In particular, these difficulties in comprehension are connected to the subcultural goals of critiquing and subverting culture. Subcultural resistance to conformity and comprehensibility is deeply connected with the group’s desire not to be dominated by mainstream culture. The desire to live on its own terms can be taken to extremes; when style is apprehended as blankness or expressionlessness, the refusal of cultural norms is interpreted as an ultimate refusal of signification as such. But, if the group cannot be defined, it cannot be dominated, either. This desire not to be dominated might be construed as a refusal of the entire communicative enterprise.

⁵⁵⁴ Hebdige, p. 52.

Therefore, obliqueness is interpreted by mainstream culture as a deliberate tactic utilized by subcultures to avoid easy definition and domination. However, this obliqueness can lead to culture's attempt to defuse subcultural criticism by treating subcultural expression as noise or interference. By treating subcultural critique as "noise," "interference," or "nonsense," rather than "sound" or "meaning," its significance is diminished from the outset. Treating subcultural expression in this way defuses the apparent threat it poses to mainstream culture by treating it as illegitimate and nonsensical.

b. Closeness to Culture and the Potential for Co-Optation

As argued above, one strategy for dealing with the dangers of subcultural expression is to treat it as mere noise or interference. However, the cultural response to such expression can also include co-optation or recuperation, by which resistance to culture becomes yet another element of culture. This will be the focus of this section.

According to Hebdige:

We have seen how subcultures 'breach our expectancies,' how they represent symbolic challenges to a symbolic order. But can subculture always be effectively incorporated and if so, how? The emergence of a spectacular subculture is invariably accompanied by a wave of hysteria in the press. The hysteria is typically ambivalent: it fluctuates between dread and fascination, outrage and amusement.⁵⁵⁵

In this passage, Hebdige points towards other avenues of response – those of reintegration and co-optation. We must ponder whether culture can reintegrate subcultures into itself by making room for their expressions and identities or whether these groups and meanings must remain outside of it because of their resistance and

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 92-93.

subversion. Another response is for subcultures to be integrated into culture by diffusing their critiques (rather than recognizing their legitimacy) and co-opting their style in order to undermine its force and power.

Because of their openness to communication with culture and closeness to it, subcultures are in greater danger than cults for co-optation. Especially when we are dealing with appearances, we must consider the ease with which culture can adopt subcultural styles and make them their own. By taking subversive styles into themselves, culture diminishes their revolutionary potential and impact by making them available for purchase, distribution, and ordinary consumption. In such cases, the act of inclusion does not recognize or give weight to the critique leveled against culture, but instead diminishes it by making it appear to be compatible with culture in its current form. As Hebdige frames the point, “the other can be trivialized, neutralized, domesticated. Here, the difference is simply denied (‘Otherness is reduced to sameness.’)”⁵⁵⁶ By treating subversive styles as mere parts of culture – reducing their differences into sameness through incorporation – their critique is dissolved. It is important to note that in some cases, the inclusion of subcultural expressions and identities is a positive step towards the generation of a more diverse and meliorative culture. However, in cases where the subcultural critique of culture is neutralized through inclusion, culture takes a step backwards. Instead of being inclusive, culture resists difference and change by means of co-optation.

While I argued above that some styles move well beyond critique of culture to an assault upon it, incorporating them into culture detracts from their subversive impact.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 97.

Inclusion, in this case, makes subcultural styles seem less dangerous, more normal, or even “trendy.” This co-optation takes style and recontextualizes it, giving it a different meaning and significance. In other words, subcultural style, when co-opted, can be bought and sold just like any other commodity. Hebdige argues:

Youth cultural styles may begin by issuing symbolic challenges, but they must inevitably end by establishing new sets of conventions; by creating new commodities, new industries or rejuvenating old ones [...] punk clothing and insignia could be bought mail-order by the summer of 1977, and in September of that year *Cosmopolitan* ran a review of Zandra Rhodes’ latest collection of couture follies which consisted entirely of variations on the punk theme. Models smoldered beneath mountains of safety pins and plastic (the pins were jeweled, the ‘plastic’ wet-look satin) and the accompanying article ended with an aphorism – ‘To shock is chic’ – which presaged the subculture’s imminent demise.⁵⁵⁷

In this scenario, we see that stylistic challenges to culture are defused, not because the critique they present has been analyzed and accepted such that the norms in question have been altered to account for these meanings, but because these critiques have been reduced to the level of “mere style.” That is, the norms and values that were critiqued through stylistic means have not been reconsidered by mainstream culture.

Interestingly, in the battle for signification or “control of the sign,” culture alternates between “othering” and “normalizing” subcultures. Both are strategies by which mainstream culture seeks to neutralize the perceived threat of subculture. Hebdige states:

[P]unk’s threat to the family was made ‘real’ (that could be my child!) through the ideological framing of photographic evidence which is popularly regarded as unproblematic. None the less, on other occasions, the opposite line was taken. For whatever reason, the inevitable glut of articles gleefully denouncing the latest punk outrage was counterbalanced by an equal number of items devoted to the small details of punk family life [...] Photographs depicting punks with smiling mothers, reclining next to the family pool, playing with the family dog, were placed above a text which dwelt on the ordinariness of individual punks: ‘It’s not

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 96.

as rocky horror as it appears’... ‘punk can be a family affair’... ‘punks as it happens, are non-political,’ and, most insidiously, albeit accurately, ‘Johnny Rotten is as big a household name as Hughie Green.’⁵⁵⁸

Treating subcultural expressions as noise, nonsense, opaque, or as “normal,” defuses their critique of culture and neutralizes it. By casting punk subculture in a wholesome light, it can be interpreted as safe or as a part of culture that poses no threat. Thus, its critique is defused and treated as though it were not incisive or worthy of deep consideration by culture.

2. Summary

Subculture resists mainstream culture by attempting to critique, subvert, and change it. It presents an alternative to mainstream culture by showing what identities and expressions mainstream culture does not currently include, and suggests that mainstream culture *ought* to include them. This is the normative dimension of subculture. As Stuart Hall frames the point, “New...developments which are both dramatic and ‘meaningless’ within the consensually validated norms, pose a challenge to the normative world. They render problematic not only how the...world is defined, but how it ought to be. They breach our ‘expectancies.’”⁵⁵⁹ Not only do subcultures present an alternative vision of culture and what it should include, but their expressions and identities also clash with current norms and values. Here, the tension between openness to communication and critique arises. The desire for recognition from mainstream culture – and the ability to change it to include those identities and values – can lead to difficulties in communication and understanding between culture and subculture. This requires

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 98.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 91. See also Hall.

mainstream culture to recognize subculture's difference from itself, but also to evaluate the subculture in a positive way as a group making an important contribution to mainstream culture through identity and expression.

The desire to communicate with culture is sometimes coupled with resistance to culture. So while subcultures are open to communication, they also express a refusal of the norms of culture. This resistance may come across negatively and turn into a conflict with culture. It may be interpreted as noise or opacity rather than meaning making either because it is misunderstood, or in order to defuse the cultural critique it presents. However, subcultural openness to communication may also provide an opportunity for co-optation. Culture may attempt to neutralize the revolutionary spirit of subculture by treating it as "mere style" instead of recognizing the organized alternative use of signs as a form of critique.

III. Transition:

Communication and Community Building in Cults and Subcultures

With this analysis of cults and subcultures in place, I want now to return to the three artists of concern to this dissertation, Andy Warhol, Gordon Matta-Clark, and David Lynch. As articulated in Chapter One, these three artists exhibit Kantian genius. Throughout the dissertation, I have been examining the question of what is at stake when taste clips the wings of genius for the sake of culture – to make its expressions more fit and lasting. Through the various degrees of clipping under investigation, the question of marginalization and silencing came into play with respect to judgments of taste and the inclusivity of culture. Whether the wings were not clipped at all, minimally clipped, or

extremely clipped, inclusion, exclusion, and silencing were at stake. Simultaneously, when particular forms of or interests in expression were put under pressure by culture, communities that valued these expressions and meanings and what they had to contribute to culture gathered themselves together. The distinction articulated between cults and subculture amounts to the following: While cults are content to preserve their meanings apart from culture – and focus upon isolationist communication within their group – subcultures are open to the possibility of communication with culture.

Openness to and engagement with culture stems from the hopes of finding a place within culture for subcultural identities and expressions. However, openness can lead to a different form of silencing – through co-optation by mainstream culture. So while both cults and subcultures express themselves in relation to culture, their strategies and approaches are markedly different. While cults aim only to communicate internally with their group, subcultures ultimately aim to communicate outwardly or externally with individuals or groups outside of their own. And while cults appear to be silent from the outside, subcultures appear to make a kind of noise that isn't fully comprehensible to culture. Cults, we might say, enclave themselves and are subsequently pushed aside or even ignored because they appear not to express anything valuable. Subcultures, by contrast, are often co-opted by culture such that its critiques are undermined or dissolved entirely.

Both kinds of groups are essential to the inquiry at hand because they articulate meanings from the fringes, meanings that are themselves fringe or marginal. Returning to Fraser's notion of counterpublics, we might say that cults and subcultures approach the issue of communication from the perspective of isolationism and publicism, respectively.

While cults aim to communicate with their group internally, subcultures aim, in some cases, to communicate with individuals or groups outside their own, most notably, with mainstream culture as such. But regardless of these differences, both cults and subcultures form themselves around identities, meanings, or expressions they consider to be valuable and worthy of maintenance and sharing.

The desire to communicate about particular artists or works of art serves as a focal point for aesthetic community formation and unification. As I argued in Chapter Two in accord with Kant, we are driven to respond to art through the exchange of our judgments of taste with one another. Even if we cannot fully make sense of the art in question, we try to work through it in conversation with other people by sharing our judgments of taste and demanding that others agree with our assessments. This is particularly complicated when we encounter works of genius that defy our expectations and thwart our attempts to fully cognize them. Even or especially in such moments, however, we are driven all the more strongly to attempt to make sense of such complicated works of art by communicating with other people who are also drawn to these works and desire to make sense of them in accord with other judges.

As I suggested in the section on cults, members are self-selecting. I say “self-selecting” because not everyone will embark on the enterprise of thinking through a work of genius that stretches the bounds of comprehensibility, let alone want to form a community that is based upon this interest. In some sense, the work calls out to these persons. Something irresistible in it attracts them, but they might not be able to express what that is.⁵⁶⁰ The work *chooses* them. To put the point in a Kantian way, the

⁵⁶⁰ Thierry De Duve. *Kant After Duchamp*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996., p. 31.

individual feels her *self* in response to the work.⁵⁶¹ Something about the work resonates with her. In reaction to this attraction, some individuals respond to the work through the exchange of judgments of taste with other persons. Those who are very interested may eventually choose to form a community. I claim that aesthetic group formation can be an effect of the collective goal of trying to comprehend works of genius, especially when these works are under pressure of marginalization or silencing. In the next sections of argument, I return to the artists with whom I opened the investigation with this idea about group formation in mind.

IV. Andy Warhol, Reception, and Group Formation

In one sense, we might say that the difficulty of Warhol's entrance into the fine art world pushes him towards cult status. I argue, however, that Warhol ultimately fostered a subculture that sought to critique the current norms of the artworld. Warhol's aesthetics sought to integrate art and life and thereby to reimagine art's relation to culture. In order to make my case, I explore the pressures that Warhol faced when he attempted to enter the world of fine art and how he became the facilitator of an underground aesthetic scene which was steeped in communal art making. To do so, I focus upon the Factory, the location and home of Warhol's creative art making community, as a center for subcultural activity that critiqued art and society. In particular, I focus upon the cooperative process of making silk-screen paintings and what this indicates about Warhol's approach to art, community, and reception. Of course, despite his difficulties

⁵⁶¹ Immanuel Kant. *The Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987., § 1.

early on, Warhol has become one of the most important artists of the 20th Century. Questions about recuperation or co-option will therefore reenter our analysis.

A. Warhol's Uncertain Beginnings: Cult or Subculture?

Warhol had a difficult time securing his place in the fine art world. Initially, he was not speaking the same language of the artworld, and so he was viewed as not speaking in a meaningful way. To put it pointedly, we might interpret Warhol's expression during the 1950s and early 1960s as under pressure from the conventions of the artworld – or even that he was being silenced by the artworld, as is evidenced by the fact that he could not find a gallery to exhibit his works. Warhol was defying the predominant norms of art making of his time – combining commercial with fine art or “low” with “high” art. This fact might explain his rejections from the artworld and go some way towards indicating his cult status during this stage of his career. By turns, it was too “commercial,” too “low-brow,” or too “ad avenue.” Instead of being seen as art, it was seen as advertising or commerce. The difference, for example, between Warhol's work and mere advertising was not fully clear, and this was interpreted negatively. In Chapter One, I explored the way in which Warhol's propensity to blur the boundaries of distinctions like art / life and fine art / commercial art made it difficult for him to break into the artworld in spite of his earnest efforts and the quality of his work. Here, I want to explore what this difficulty meant for the reception of Warhol's work and the directions his aesthetic took subsequently. In particular, I want to examine how these events may be related to the formation of an aesthetic community.

While Warhol's Pop Art is today considered a pivotal moment in the history of art and aesthetics, it was not embraced at its introduction. Warhol was not speaking the

predominant language of the artworld in the 1950s – Abstract Expressionism in particular; he was speaking in the vernacular of everyday people. For a time, Warhol toyed with Abstract Expressionism in his work by making sure that splashes and splotches of “action” marked his paintings to show his “sensitivity.”⁵⁶² He did this in order to fit in or gain acceptance in the artworld and to mark his work as “now.”⁵⁶³ But according to Emile de Antonio, this detracted from rather than added to Warhol’s work:

[Andy] put two large paintings next to one another. Usually he showed me the work more casually, so I realized that this was a presentation. He had painted two pictures of Coke bottles about six feet tall. One was just a pristine black-and-white Coke bottle. The other had a lot of Abstract Expressionist marks on it. I said ‘Come on Andy, the abstract one is a piece of shit, the other one is remarkable. It’s our society, it’s who we are, it’s absolutely beautiful and naked, and you ought to destroy the first one and show the other.’⁵⁶⁴

While Abstract Expressionism was an American movement, it didn’t express Warhol’s aesthetic interests. This feedback from a trusted friend served as a crucial turning point for Warhol. Instead of trying to “fit in” to Abstract Expressionism, Warhol started to go his own way toward the expression of everyday life. In doing so, he raised questions about what could be considered art and what the difference between art and life amounted to. As Danto puts the point, “The mandate was: *paint what we are*. The breakthrough was the insight into what we are. We are the kind of people that are looking for the kind of happiness advertisements promise us that we can have, easily and cheaply. [...] Warhol began to paint the advertisements in which our deficiencies and hopes are portrayed.”⁵⁶⁵ In advertisements, Warhol saw the dreams and desires of the American

⁵⁶² Steven Watson. *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2003., p. 74.

⁵⁶³ Arthur Danto. *Andy Warhol*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009., p. 14.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15-16. Here, Danto is quoting from Victor Bokris. *Warhol: The Biography*. New York: Da Capo, 2003. These events were said to have occurred in 1960.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16, emphasis in original.

people depicted in vivid detail. In selecting everyday advertisements or commodities as his subject matter, Warhol started to explore the border between commercial and fine art.

In a telling move, before Warhol secured a “proper” gallery show, he exhibited in liminal spaces: “the Loft Gallery was a modest showroom adjoining an advertising office, Serendipity was a restaurant, and Bonwit Teller was a store. Just as they weren’t ‘real’ galleries, Andy’s work was not regarded as ‘real’ art. He was not on the radar screen.”⁵⁶⁶

These liminal exhibitions indicate that the kind of art Warhol was interested in making was not understood to be fine art – it was closer to commerce and everyday life. But this leads to a conundrum regarding how to categorize Warhol’s work. Was it a form of isolationist, cult expression? Or was it a form of publicist, subcultural expression?

The lack of understanding of Warhol’s work is not on its own enough to justify classifying it as cult expression. It is also crucial to examine Warhol’s goals for his art. Because Warhol genuinely aimed to engage and communicate with wider publics including that of the artworld, I hesitate to categorize his work as isolationist cult expression. Warhol’s tenacious pursuit of an exhibition in the artworld means that he aimed at publicist rather than isolationist expression. However, the subcultural classification should also give us pause because Warhol did not yet have a real community to receive or collaborate with him on his work, as became the case later in his career with the Factory. Is it possible that Warhol was a one-man subculture? Or that he produced subcultural expressions without the support of a subcultural community? Is it possible that Warhol’s early years were marked by a combination of these expressions? It seems to me that Warhol’s early years were marked by a combination of cult and

⁵⁶⁶ Watson, p. 30.

subcultural expression based upon the lack of understanding of his work in combination with his goal of expressing himself to wider publics.

To address these questions, let us return to the *Advertisement* paintings Warhol displayed in the window of Bonwit Teller's department store that appeared to be advertisements that were related to the clothing on display. Danto states:

Warhol's first exhibition [...] belonged by rights to the Warhol of shoes and pussycats: the Fifty-seventh Street windows of Bonwit Teller. But the paintings on display for one week only, in mid-April 1961, belong to his new phase. There are five in all. *Advertisement* is based on a montage of black-and-white newspaper ads: for hair tinting; for acquiring strong arms and broad shoulders; for nose reshaping; for prosthetic aids for rupture; and ("No Finer Drink") Pepsi-Cola.⁵⁶⁷

The images looked more like advertisements for elixirs promising quick cures from the back pages of disreputable newspapers than like works of art. As a result, few who saw Warhol's paintings in this window display viewed them as works of fine art. As Danto comments, "Who, pausing to look at the display would have predicted that *Advertisement* would find its way to Berlin's National Gallery by way of the museum at Monchengladbach and the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum for Contemporary Art?"⁵⁶⁸ In a sense, this near-lack of reception is similar to that of the overlooked readymades that Duchamp displayed at the entrance to a gallery show.⁵⁶⁹

Because of their similarity to advertisements or illustrations, Warhol's paintings blended in with the rest of the window display. Danto states, "What almost nobody in 1961 would have seen, had they passed the window at Bonwit Teller, is that it was full of art. They thought they were looking at women's wear, with some vernacular images

⁵⁶⁷ Danto, p. 17.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵⁶⁹ De Duve, p. 102. See footnote #22. See also *Marcel Duchamp: Letters to Marcel Jean*. Munich: Silke Schreiber Verlag, 1987, p. 77.

taken from the culture...⁵⁷⁰ While most did not recognize Warhol's paintings to be art of any sort, some viewers might have understood the paintings to be a form of commercial art or advertising due to the similarity of the images they contained. The use of subject-matter like soup and scouring pads might be one reason for their problematic reception, for it raised the question: what distinguishes Warhol's work from advertising? The use of familiar products as subject-matter also suggests that art is for everyone, just as Campbell's soup or Coke is for everyone, not just for the monied artworld elite.⁵⁷¹ As Warhol put the point, "Pop art is for everyone. I don't think art should be only for the select few, I think it should be for the mass of American people..."⁵⁷² Warhol's populism extended from the subject-matter of his works to their exhibition and sale. As Danto recalls, Warhol later had a stack of paintings at the front desk of the Castelli Gallery that were priced for everyday people: "A genuine work of art for five bucks!"⁵⁷³

The "ads" in Bonwit's window and the Coke Bottle paintings would ultimately develop into a Warholian love affair with depicting commercial products – from Campbell's soup cans to Brillo boxes. By some accounts, Warhol got the idea for his "soup" paintings from Muriel Latow, who suggested that he paint something "everybody sees every day, that everybody recognizes...like a can of soup."⁵⁷⁴ Interestingly, Warhol made the commonness or everydayness of Campbell's soup an aesthetic by mass-producing these works using the silk-screening process. As the size and number of

⁵⁷⁰ Danto, p. 21.

⁵⁷¹ I will return to this point momentarily in conjunction with the notion of "repetition" and "sameness." See also Andy Warhol. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: (From A to B and Back Again)*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Inc., 1977., p. 100.

⁵⁷² Benjamin H.D. Buchloh. "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966." In *Andy Warhol (October Files 2)*. Ed., Annette Michelson. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001., p. 5.

⁵⁷³ Danto, p. 144.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

paintings grew, Warhol began to employ the assistance of his friends and associates and ultimately the Factory subculture was born. I will return to this point in the next section of argument.

According to Danto, part of the reason for Warhol's selection of Campbell's soup cans as subject-matter for his paintings was that he thought it would put him in the company of other avant-garde artists of his day. Danto states:

[I]t would have seemed to Warhol that painting that kind of subject [Campbell's soup cans] was a step toward becoming one of Castelli's artists, and showing in his gallery, which specialized in a certain kind of cutting edge art. Castelli had taken on Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns – the artists Warhol admired most. He had just taken on Lichtenstein, whose art was close to what Warhol himself was producing, though Warhol had evidently been unaware of him.⁵⁷⁵

In fact, Warhol's first solo show took place at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles in July, 1962. It featured a series of the *Campbell's Soup Cans* that Warhol produced utilizing the silk-screening technique. This process allowed Warhol to use a stencil to manufacture multiple copies of a single image, or, in this case, to manufacture uniform (and un-painterly) silk-screened paintings of all of the thirty-two varieties of Campbell's soup. According to Danto, "The *Campbell's Soup Cans* were portraits, in that each contained a different variety of soup, the name of which was printed on its label. Repetition came to be one of the master elements in what could be called the Warhol aesthetic."⁵⁷⁶

In one sense, the *Campbell's Soup Cans* were portraits of commodities. For Warhol, what made Campbell's soup great was its reliable "sameness." Everyone, regardless of his or her class or economic status, could get the *same* soup and no one

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

buying Campbell's could get a *better* soup than anyone else.⁵⁷⁷ In this sense, the *Campbell's Soup Cans* were oblique portraits of the American people who consumed these soups. This made the art accessible to everyone because of the product's familiarity in their everyday lives, that is, because the paintings were for and about *them*. From a different perspective, one could even argue that the paintings were a portrait of Warhol himself, because he reportedly ate Campbell's soup for lunch everyday as well. Again, the reliable sameness of the soup appealed to Warhol's habitual nature. Combining these two perspectives, one can argue that the paintings are about Warhol as much as they are about America and its products.

Repetition would ultimately play an important role in Warhol's aesthetic. Not only did Warhol display *Campbell's Soup Cans* as a series at the Ferus Gallery,⁵⁷⁸ but he also continued to produce silk-screened paintings based upon the principles of repetition and difference. Importantly, as the number and size of his paintings grew, it became clear that Warhol needed an assistant in his work. In fact, Warhol built a community around making aesthetic projects of various sorts. In addition to the increased publicity surrounding Warhol, the formation of the Factory is a decisive point in turning his status

⁵⁷⁷ Warhol famously made this point in relationship to Coca-Cola: "What's great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you can know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the Cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good. Liz Taylor knows it, the President knows it, the bum knows it, and you know it." See Andy Warhol. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: (From A to B and Back Again)*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Inc., 1977., p. 100.

⁵⁷⁸ Danto states, "When the work was displayed at the Ferus Gallery [...] they were displayed in a single line, placed on a narrow shelf around the gallery. And they were evidently sold one at a time, for \$100 each. But the dealer, Irving Blum, increasingly felt that the paintings belonged together, 'as a set,' as he put it. Warhol was pleased by Blum's decision, since they were 'conceived as a series.'" See Danto, p. 34-35.

from cult to subculture. Repetition and community would become leading factors in Warhol's aesthetics moving forward.

To summarize this section of argument, Warhol's early career is marked by both cult and subcultural expression. While Warhol continually sought out opportunities to show his work, he had difficulty securing an exhibition in a traditional gallery. This shows that Warhol aimed to address a wider audience with his art, and as such, that he utilized a type of publicist subcultural expression. As noted above, however, Warhol did not yet have a community with whom he shared and collaborated on his art. So, we might say that Warhol was a "one-man subculture" who expressed himself in ways that were difficult to understand by the standards of mainstream culture and of the artworld. However, because most who saw Warhol's early work did not understand it to be art, we might instead characterize these paintings as a form of cult expression. Because his *Advertisement* paintings were overlooked while on display in the window of Bonwit Teller's, we might even say that Warhol's expression was "received" by culture as a form of silence. If these paintings were seen at all, they were understood as a kind of background noise rather than as aesthetic expression. My indecision about how to classify Warhol's early career points to the difficulty of distinguishing between cult and subcultural expressions. Because the notion of a "one-man subculture" is a contradiction in terms, I favor the interpretation of Warhol's work as a form of cult expression that mysteriously combined fine art and commercial art.

B. Warhol's Factory Subculture

In the 60s and 70s Warhol engaged in art making in a way that invited and demanded the community and participation of others. Ultimately, Warhol's interest in

communal art projects culminated in the rise of the Factory, Warhol's studio, and the center for art making, gathering, happenings, work, and life. It was a permissive and creative space where almost anything went and where painting, music, poetry, and film were made with others. In addition to more traditional artworld figures, Warhol also drew in a variety of creative individuals who were outsiders or misfits in their day-to-day lives. Their outsider status stemmed from the fact that their identities and expressions were unacceptable to mainstream culture. In the Factory these individuals gained acceptance and voice and would ultimately be embraced as Superstars. This aspect of Warhol's aesthetics is crucial in that it shows how an aesthetic community formed in response to exclusion and silencing.

Even after some initial successes, and the making of in-roads into the artworld, Warhol was nonetheless not part of the art establishment. Indeed, in his first show at the Ferus Gallery, Warhol sold only six of thirty-two paintings.⁵⁷⁹ He was becoming more connected, but Warhol was still on the fringes of the artworld. As Watson notes of subsequent exhibitions:

Elvis Presley was the sole subject of Andy Warhol's exhibition at the Ferus Gallery in September 1963: none sold [...] In the wake of his sold-out debut at the Stable Gallery, one might assume Warhol felt flush. He was instead experiencing the vagaries of the art world. Eleanor Ward had refused to show his *Death and Disaster* paintings. Andy felt financially strapped. He decided not to frame his paintings before shipping them to L.A. He simply left the silk-screened images on long, uncut rolls to be stretched and framed on the West Coast.⁵⁸⁰

Warhol's work was sometimes met with success, but it was still quite controversial. The controversy made Warhol a popular topic of conversation – his *Campbell's Soup Cans*

⁵⁷⁹ Watson, p. 80. While this ratio might seem to indicate the success of the exhibition, it is belied by the low asking prices. According to Watson, "Dennis Hopper was the first to buy, and only five others followed him – even though the paintings were priced at a mere hundred dollars." See Watson, p. 80.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 110.

were discussed in *Time* magazine before they were shown at the Ferus Gallery⁵⁸¹ – but this notoriety didn't always translate into being taken seriously as a fine artist or into securing exhibitions. In fact, during the early sixties, Warhol's reception was marked by as much failure as success.

In connection with this point, Watson writes about a road-trip from New York to Los Angeles that Warhol and some of his coterie took in 1963 for the September opening of his show at Ferus.⁵⁸² In part, this mode of transportation was chosen based upon financial considerations; in part, it was chosen because it presented an opportunity to bond and to “see America on the road,” as Gerard Malanga, Warhol's assistant, put it.⁵⁸³

Watson writes:

[Taylor] Mead recalled, ‘It was a whole new way of looking at the United States, filled with the bright, primary colors that Warhol or Lichtenstein might have painted. Especially the signs over the motels along Route 66. As we got farther west, all the signs on motels were real Pop Art.’ The biggest sensations of all were the signs and billboards along Sunset Strip in Los Angeles: towering images, exaggerated colors, reproductions that were hyperreal and improbably big. ‘Oh, this is America!’ Andy repeatedly said.⁵⁸⁴

This anecdote illustrates that by 1963 Warhol was already working cooperatively with a group of individuals on art projects across several media. Malanga, a poet, became Warhol's trusted assistant who played a critical role in executing the larger silk-screening projects because of his prior experience in this area.⁵⁸⁵ Together, Warhol and Malanga

⁵⁸¹ Danto, p. 35.

⁵⁸² Watson, p. 444.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., p. 110.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 111.

⁵⁸⁵ According to Watson, “Gerard had worked as an \$1.25-an-hour apprentice for [...] Leon Hecht, from whom he learned the craft of silk-screening fabric for RoosterCraft ties.” See Watson, p. 93.

would silk-screen series including *Elizabeth Taylor* and *Elvis Presley* and *Ethel Scull Thirty-six Times*.⁵⁸⁶

Warhol's use of mechanical reproduction, in conjunction with his cooperation with assistants, raised further questions about the originality of his work. Warhol's orientation towards a community of art making distanced him even further from the model of a singular artistic genius. Perhaps as a result of being silenced by the artworld through his early rejections, Warhol sought to create his own community, or what I argue became a subculture. I'm not claiming that this is a directly causal relationship, but rather, that as Warhol's art developed, it developed in conjunction and community with other individuals who had similar interests, concerns, or criticisms of the contemporary artworld in the 1960s. The community that Warhol garnered was not only made up of those who thought his work was worthwhile or interesting in its own right, but was also comprised of other artists, "outsiders" and "transgressors" of norms. They were interested in "seeing and being seen" and in art that raised questions about this relationship. Just as in subcultures as defined earlier in this chapter, Warhol's Factory raised the question of appearances or style to as a form of critique.

The Factory, in its various incarnations, was more than just a studio space for Warhol.⁵⁸⁷ It was a gathering place for a community of misfits and outsiders from all walks of life. As Danto puts the point, "almost from the beginning, the Silver Factory became a 'scene' – a place where people dropped in and became part of what was

⁵⁸⁶ By this time in 1962, Warhol had already begun his *Marilyn* and *Death and Disaster* series.

⁵⁸⁷ The Silver Factory was the name of Warhol's studio from 1964-1968. It was so called because its walls and décor were silvered with paint and foil. The location was a former hat factory located on East 47th Street. The Factory ultimately moved to Union Square when the Silver Factory was condemned. Watson writes, "[it] was a distinctly different environment. Instead of reflective tinfoil and silver concrete, the new studio featured light pouring through tall windows and natural wood on the floor." See Watson, p. 371, xi-xii, and p. 359.

happening. It was certainly unlike any art studio at the time in its openness. Work went on, but a lot more than that went on.”⁵⁸⁸ Almost everyone who came to the Factory was asked to participate in whatever project was underway at that moment – whether it was an experimental short film or silk-screening paintings. Occasionally, movie stars or musicians stopped by just to take in the scene and ended up becoming a part of it.⁵⁸⁹

The collective time, creativity, and talent of these individuals yielded various silk-screen paintings (*Flowers* in particular were a collective endeavor; Warhol commonly had several people working on the smaller canvases which are estimated at a total of 900 in all, with the Factory producing up to eighty per day),⁵⁹⁰ the *Screen Tests*, which had multiple “portrait” subjects, with a total number of films estimated at 472,⁵⁹¹ films like *Sleep, Tarzan and Jane Regained...Sort Of, Batman / Dracula, Kiss, Eat*, and the *Chelsea Girls*,⁵⁹² and experimental musical happenings from the Exploding Plastic Inevitable (featuring the Velvet Underground). The people who were invited in to the Factory were selected for their personality, creativity, or style. Many were artists in their own right – like Malanga, who was a poet, the Velvet Underground, who were musicians, and Paul Morrissey, who was a filmmaker. Other members of the Factory were from the farther fringes of society. Because they were treated as different or unequal by culture due to their sexual orientation, manner of dress, or drug habits, they gravitated towards the openness and acceptance that the Factory had to offer. Over time, Warhol’s coterie

⁵⁸⁸ Danto, p. 74-75.

⁵⁸⁹ See Steven Watson’s *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties* for a detailed account of the individuals who participated in Warhol’s art making.

⁵⁹⁰ Patrick S. Smith. *The Art and Films of Andy Warhol*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986., p. 193. Sometimes there were as many as fifteen Factory members working on the smaller *Flowers* paintings together in the afternoon.

⁵⁹¹ Callie Angell. *Andy Warhol’s Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*. New York: Abrams, in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 2006., p. 8.

⁵⁹² Watson, p. 104, p. 133, p. 138, p. 179, p. 304-306, p. 409.

coalesced into a collective of artists, poets, musicians, movie stars, socialites, glitterati, transvestites, drag queens, amphetamine junkies, homosexuals, and personalities of all sorts.

The Factory subculture was a creative environment in which individuals could get together and do whatever they wanted under Warhol's permissive and ever-watching eye. Warhol's single caveat was that he could observe or even film the activities taking place in the Factory.⁵⁹³ The Factory gave artists and outcasts a place to be themselves and where they were shielded from the negativity and judgmental restrictions of the outside world. Despite the fact that Warhol was watching and filming these personalities, they still felt free to do as they pleased. This is because Warhol was not interested in judging them;⁵⁹⁴ he just wanted to be part of their scene and facilitate their creativity. Their identities and expressions were valued in the Factory in a way they were not in mainstream culture. Warhol not only accepted these unconventional individuals, but he invited them into his inner circle and sometimes raised them to the level of Superstars.⁵⁹⁵ Moreover, even though they were being filmed, the footage would only be consumed by others in the underground film scene of the day.

With Warhol's interest in creating Superstars, we see style and meaning-making closely intertwined, just as in any subculture. When Warhol made appearances in public,

⁵⁹³ Watson, xiv.

⁵⁹⁴ Recall that this is similar to Lynch's lack of judgment of his characters in *Blue Velvet*, as established in Chapter One.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, xii,-xv. According to Watson, "Warhol often allowed his associates to do things they had never done before; he provided them an intimate stage for performing themselves. Some described that interaction's social dynamic as 'mutual vampirism' while others just called it 'total freedom.' [...] The Silver Factory was, above all, a zone of possibility and play. Warhol greeted everything that happened with the same nonspecific enthusiasm. He absorbed the outlandish behavior of the Sixties culture, gleaning bits from art and gossip and fashion and movies. He simply said 'wow' or 'great.' He didn't appear to filter reality as it registered on his radar, but of course he did. He framed. You were in the frame or you were not." See Watson xiii-xiv.

he was virtually inseparable from his coterie.⁵⁹⁶ The various characters and personalities who gathered around Warhol were as interested in art making as in making a scene. Some even aspired to become famous based upon their connection to Warhol and their roles in his various films and projects. In some cases, Warhol changed everyday people – sometimes misfits or rejects – into glamorous “Superstars.” The transformation of their identities made these individuals visible for the first time and raised their status; it also presented a critique of culture for not accepting and making space for them in the first place.

Warhol facilitated a subcultural scene in which individuals who felt like outcasts could feel welcome and accepted, perhaps because Warhol himself felt like an outsider throughout his life. Warhol understood difference very deeply from his own Ruthenian-American upbringing as Andrew Warhola. His constant desire was to fit in by appearing to be American and attractive, but his awkwardness and acne made this difficult. Hence, the aforementioned transformation from outcast misfit to glamorous Superstar was something Warhol aspired to throughout his life. Moreover, Warhol was raised at a time when being openly homosexual was not as widely accepted as it is today.⁵⁹⁷

This outsider status led Warhol to facilitate the Factory subculture. He created an environment in which everyone could be who they were – who they wanted to be – without restrictions or judgments. Warhol stoked the creativity of those around him by

⁵⁹⁶ See Watson for a detailed account of Warhol’s connection to Sedgwick.

⁵⁹⁷ Even as he grew older and became an established artist, Warhol wasn’t fully accepted by other artists, even homosexual ones. This was particularly disappointing to Warhol in the cases of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns – two artists he admired greatly. According to Emile de Antonio, mutual friend to all three, when pressed to explain why they disapproved of Warhol: “Okay, Andy, if you really want to hear it straight, I’ll lay it out for you. You’re too swish, and that upsets them. . . . Yes, Andy, there are others who are more swish – and less talented, but the *major painters* try to look straight; you play up the swish – it’s like an armor with you.” See Watson, p. 78-79. At the time, many homosexual artists affected a hyper-masculine personality in public, so Warhol’s effeminacy was perceived to be too open an indicator of his sexual orientation, and therefore, inappropriate by the likes of Rauschenberg and Johns.

making the Factory a place where just about anything was permitted. It is important to note that the subcultural environment Warhol made possible was not sustainable. The permissiveness led to disaster, when Valerie Solanas entered the Factory and shot Warhol on June 3, 1968. While he survived the event, he and the Factory were never the same again. Warhol became much more guarded and protective of his person and wary of those around him.

Summary

In this section, I have argued that Warhol's artwork and position vis-à-vis culture changed over time. During his early years of trying to secure an exhibition for his seemingly commercial works, Warhol was a cultish figure. From the perspective of the artworld at the time, Warhol's work did not seem distinguishable from advertising or from the work of other Pop artists. Because this was a new move in the language game of art making, Warhol's contributions were not fully heard or accepted at first. As I have argued here and in Chapter One, Warhol experienced much resistance in his search for an artworld exhibition space. As he gained more acceptance, Warhol's inner circle grew into a full-fledged subculture at the Factory. Warhol's work was marked by mechanical reproduction and communal art making techniques. The acceptance that Warhol sought throughout his life and career was found in the permissive atmosphere of the Factory. There, Warhol facilitated an atmosphere in which many who felt outcast or adrift found a voice as they participated in the work and play that were taking place there.

V. Gordon Matta-Clark

Gordon Matta-Clark lived and worked in New York City slightly after Warhol's Factory subculture was in bloom. Like Warhol, Matta-Clark gathered an interesting group of artists and intellectuals around him with whom he worked in efforts to generate a community. He collaborated with other artists and creative individuals on a variety of projects including a restaurant called simply *Food*. As highlighted in Chapter One, Matta-Clark was interested in gathering individuals together in order to experience and participate in art because he was interested in the generation of aesthetic communities around which meaning making could take place. His projects were often made in public spaces like restaurants, piers, houses, and on the street – locales that were accessible to all. While at first blush, some of Matta-Clark's projects might appear to be more private because they took place in abandoned or condemned spaces, they were nonetheless accessible to all who dared venture into them. In this way, Matta-Clark sought to reclaim spaces that were forgotten or dilapidated in the spirit of creating community and sharing an experience.

In Chapter One, we saw this with *Splitting*. With this work, Matta-Clark made a house in suburban New Jersey a focal point for art and life by bussing in people in order to explore its spaces and gaps together with others. Because he physically split the house in half, it was quite difficult to move through the structure as the gap widened. Sculptor Alice Aycock recalls: "Starting at the bottom of the stairs where the crack was small, you'd go up, and as you'd go further up, you'd have to keep crossing the crack. It kept widening as you made your way up to the top, the crack was one or two feet wide. You

really had to jump it. You sensed the abyss in a kinesthetic and psychological way.”⁵⁹⁸

In order for the work to be complete, people had to interact with and climb through it.

Through such works, Matta-Clark facilitated community formation.

In this section of argument, I investigate some of Matta-Clark’s other aesthetic interventions that were developed with the hope of stirring up and galvanizing an aesthetic community, including *Pig Roast*, *Food*, and *Day’s End*. As aforementioned, Matta-Clark’s work was meant to establish a shared sense of community with other individuals. This involved participation in the works of art as well as the exchange of judgments of taste about them. Here, I argue more specifically that the aesthetic community that developed in response to Matta-Clark’s work can be characterized as a subculture. In particular, his works forged a community who aimed to assess and critique the current state of the artworld in order to expand the concept of art because his works were close to, and perhaps even blurred the line with, life.

A. Community Revitalization: Gordon Matta-Clark’s Subculture

In undated notes, Gordon-Matta Clark states, “Among the conditions my training and personal inclination have taught me to deal with is neglect and abandonment. These are words which when applied to children or human beings of any age evoke a profound call for alarm and rectification, yet when existing in massive proportions throughout our urban environment evokes only bureaucratic or juridic ambivalence and in-action.”⁵⁹⁹

Put differently, problems of neglect and abandonment have a profound impact upon

⁵⁹⁸ Pamela M. Lee. *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001., p. 29.

⁵⁹⁹ Judith Russi Kirshner. “The Idea of Community in the Work of Gordon-Matta Clark.” In *Gordon Matta-Clark*. Ed., Corinne Diserens. New York: Phaidon Press, Inc., 2006., p. 148. Kirshner provides this quote from Matta-Clark’s undated notes in the GMCA.

individuals, families, and communities and therefore need to be redressed in a serious fashion. However, as Matta-Clark points out here, bureaucratic responses have been inadequate. As an artist, he tried to bring the crisis of a lack of unity and the disintegration of community into sharper focus by assembling people to share in an aesthetic experience. To borrow a Kantian phrase, we might say that Matta-Clark demanded that people gather to feel and experience works of art together. This gathering would help combat the disintegration of community, first by recognizing this phenomenon in their cities and towns and second by forging a community that could experience and discuss art together.

As I have argued above, the exchange of judgments of taste with one another can be the basis for the development of sociability into community formation.⁶⁰⁰ Consider again the work *Splitting*, in which people moved through the abandoned space of a suburban home in New Jersey. In this work, Matta-Clark reconfigured the building's physical structure to manifest the split of family from home and family from community that took place along with the eviction of the tenants. But he did so in a way that brought an ephemeral beauty to the space and that gave voice to the evicted / excluded tenants. By bringing persons "back home," Matta-Clark reestablished a community there and made the home vital once again.

Matta-Clark was in constant pursuit of connection in his artworks. Because he grew up with his mother, Ann Clark, and twin brother, Sebastian, but apart from his father, Roberto Matta-Echaurren,⁶⁰¹ the themes of abandonment and community

⁶⁰⁰ See Kant, particularly §9 and §60.

⁶⁰¹ Roberto Matta-Echaurren (1911-2002) was a famous Chilean Surrealist painter who was very influential in the avant-garde during the 1940s. Matta's friendship with Marcel Duchamp led him to serve

permeate Matta-Clark's works in a very personal way.⁶⁰² The estrangement of Matta-Clark from his father, compounded with the loss of his twin,⁶⁰³ stoked his desire to forge strong bonds of connection with others. While Matta-Clark was not related to the audience of his work through ties of blood, he was nonetheless connected to them through interests such as art and community life. As Judith Russi Kirshner puts the point, "Matta-Clark's empathy and search for solidarity connected him repeatedly to local communities. Fundamentally generous, his art practice challenged the traditions of specific cultural, social, and political sites. Often events culminated in meals: for instance, a pig roast under the Brooklyn Bridge in 1971 and the inventive menus at *Food*, the fabled restaurant he cofounded with Caroline Goodden, supplying nourishment and jobs for artists."⁶⁰⁴ The intimacy of breaking bread together points towards the notion that community and family can be fostered through the practice of eating meals together.

Pig Roast was the finale of a group show that took place beneath the Brooklyn Bridge. Matta-Clark "conceived a multipart epic"⁶⁰⁵ involving an interactive pig roast and multiple sculptures including *Fire Boy* and *Jacks*. The latter was erected from "hulks of wrecked cars" which were decorated with dried branches atop them. These sculptures

as godfather to Matta's twin sons. See Thomas Crow, "Gordon Matta-Clark." In *Gordon Matta-Clark*. Ed., Corinne Diserens. New York: Phaidon Press, Inc., 2006., p. 16.

⁶⁰² Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., p. 102. The cause of Sebastian's death in 1976 is officially undetermined; either he fell from a window in Matta-Clark's apartment, or he committed suicide. This event was the cause of much sadness and guilt for the artist. A year later, he made *Descending Steps for Batan*, as a memorial for his brother. According to Pamela Lee, "No work challenges this illusion [of permanence] as poignantly as the site piece Matta-Clark produced for Galerie Yvon Lambert, *Descending Steps for Batan*. A deeply mournful piece, *Descending Steps for Batan* attenuates the issue of lost community through the example of the artist's own personal grief: it was dedicated to Gordon's twin brother Batan (Sebastian), who had allegedly committed suicide by jumping from the window of Gordon's studio the summer before. Devastated, Matta-Clark produced a memorial to his brother in France, a cavernous hole dug directly into the foundations of the gallery. Every day of the exhibition, which began April 21, 1977, and lasted through the first week of May, he continued to dig deeper into the ground, creating a progressively larger and dirtier hole within a space traditionally pristine and white." See Lee, p. 207.

⁶⁰⁴ Kirshner, p. 148.

⁶⁰⁵ Crow, p. 38.

were moved into temporary shelters under the bridge. The placement of branches atop these sculptures made them look as if they were to be set on fire, like pyres of some

sort.⁶⁰⁶ According to Thomas Crow:

At the conclusion of the event, marked by a Philip Glass concert, Matta roasted an entire pig on a spit over an open fire, then passed out five hundred pork sandwiches. Though this visceral performance, *Pig Roast*, effected only an imperfect transition from raw to cooked ('It would have taken two days to roast a pig that size to cook it properly,' remembers sculptor Jackie Winsor with a shudder), he managed for the first time to act out his favorite mythic subtexts as communal ritual on a truly grand scale.⁶⁰⁷

Matta-Clark's interest in art making and community making are joined in this act.

Because individuals were participating in the event by attempting to consume the undercooked roasted pig, the boundaries of art making and community building were blurred in a way similar to what transpired at "happenings" in the 1960s. According to Allan Kaprow:

Happenings are events that, put simply, happen. Though the best of them have a decided impact – that is, we feel, 'here is something important' – they appear to go nowhere and do not make any particular literary point. In contrast to arts of the past, they have no structured beginning, middle, or end. Their form is open-ended and fluid; nothing obvious is sought and therefore nothing is won, except the certainty of a number of occurrences to which we are more than normally attentive.⁶⁰⁸

In some ways, Matta-Clark's work could be considered a type of happening. But while, for Kaprow, "[h]appenings are events that, put simply, happen," for Matta-Clark, the purpose was to build community and seek ways to solicit the participation of individuals in his works, whether by getting them to climb through his building cuts or

⁶⁰⁶ Diserens, p. 194. This is from an interview with Caroline Goodden that was compiled as part of the catalogue for *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, in 1985. Joan Simon compiled the catalogue notes. In future notes from these interviews, I will merely refer to the page in Diserens' volume and indicate the interviewee.

⁶⁰⁷ Crow, p. 40.

⁶⁰⁸ Allan Kaprow. "Happenings in the New York Scene." In *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*. Ed., Jeff Kelley. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003., p. 16.

consume sandwiches as part of *Pig Roast*. Matta-Clark felt that his works were incomplete until he could get the audience involved as participants. “My understanding of art in a social context is as an essentially generous human act, an individually positive attempt to encounter the real world through expressive interpretation.”⁶⁰⁹ Not only did Matta-Clark want to bring people together to see or experience his works; he invited his audience to participate as well. *Pig Roast* and the associated works from Matta-Clark’s “multipart epic” required cooperation and participation. These works involved an “encounter [with] the real world” and an encounter with other individuals. The people present at this event shared their experiences and became part of an aesthetic community through communication about the works and sharing their judgments of taste. They shared what Jerome Kohn’s calls a “common world.”⁶¹⁰

Matta-Clark’s notion of “art in a social context” also intertwined the health of society with the health of its art. Works like *Pig Roast* explore the relationship of art and life, or art and society as Matta-Clark frames the point. Through such works, Matta-Clark sought to effect change by generating community among individuals who need and want to support one another. We might consider this community to be an aesthetic subculture in which not convention and tradition, but the exchange of judgment is the guiding value. This again relates to Kaprow’s notion of happenings. Kaprow states, “Happenings invite us to cast aside for a moment these proper manners and partake wholly in the real nature of the art and (one hopes) life. Thus a Happening is rough and

⁶⁰⁹ Kirshner, p. 148.

⁶¹⁰ Jerome Kohn. “Kant’s Common World.” *Raritan* 22 (3) (Winter 2003): 102-113.

sudden and often feels ‘dirty.’ Dirt, we might begin to realize, is also organic and fertile, and everything, including the visitors can grow a little in such circumstances.”⁶¹¹

Arguably, these themes of growth and community were explored even more directly when Matta-Clark paired with Caroline Goodden to open *Food*. Here, community and eating are brought back together, but with more edible results than with *Pig Roast*. In their restaurant, Matta-Clark offered a variety of creative meals at affordable prices. The restaurant not only fed artists, but also provided work for some of them.⁶¹² Thomas Crow writes:

Taking over the premises of a defunct bodega in the heart of SoHo (and consuming most of Goodden’s inheritance), *Food* became something of a permanent stage for Matta-Clark and numerous friends, while providing reasonably cheap, fresh, and healthy nourishment for the youthful contingent of loft-dwellers in a neighborhood with next to no commercial infrastructure. His Louisiana friends, musician Dickie Landry and performance artist Tina Girouard, put them in touch with a spirited community of Cajun expatriates in lower Manhattan, from whom they drew talented cooks, novel recipes, and a certain festive dining philosophy that matched the art community’s own developing rituals.⁶¹³

While Crow resists calling *Food* an artwork in its own right,⁶¹⁴ when considered in light of Kaprow’s notions of happenings articulated above, *Food* qualifies in terms of its goal and ability to gather persons together to eat and work together as a community.

According to Goodden, Matta-Clark considered the restaurant to be “one big sculpture.”⁶¹⁵ Goodden recalls, “He designed everything in it – the tables, counter, low

⁶¹¹ Kaprow, p. 18. It is interesting to note in connection with the “dirtiness” of happenings that many of Matta-Clark’s works dealt with earth or dirt both directly and metaphorically. Cases in point include *Garbage Wall* (1970), *Tree Dance* (1971), *Cherry Tree* (1971), and *Descending Steps for Batan* (1977). Each of these works dealt with dirt in its own way – whether by assembling garbage into a structure or digging holes in gallery floors.

⁶¹² Kirshner, p. 148.

⁶¹³ Crow, p. 44.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁶¹⁵ Diserens, p. 194. This is from an interview with Caroline Goodden.

stove, cooking pots, wonderful-looking containers and cooking utensils (which we could never afford to build). [...] He made a film of *Food* and spent hours editing it with filmmaker Bob Fiore's help."⁶¹⁶ At the time, the menu was incredibly fresh and inventive, and many of its innovations are now the standard for cuisine. According to Randy Kennedy in "When Meals Were the Muse":

The restaurant lasted not quite three years in its original incarnation, as the artists who cooked in it and who ran it, more as a utopian enterprise than a business, burned out or moved on. But many of the vaguely countercultural ideas fostered there – fresh and seasonal foods, a geographically catholic menu, a kitchen fully open to the dining room, cooking as a kind of performance – have now become so ingrained in restaurants in New York and other large cities that it is hard to remember a time when such a place would have seemed almost extraterrestrial.⁶¹⁷

In addition to local and fresh fare, the restaurant served foods that were practically unheard of at the time. According to Kennedy, "The restaurant, for example, served sushi and sashimi at a time when they were still not widely seen in New York. [...] The same menu featured ceviche, borscht, rabbit stew with prunes, stuffed tongue Creole and a fig, garlic and anchovy salad."⁶¹⁸ Variety and creativity were the touchstones of *Food's* menu.

Matta-Clark also introduced "guest-chef" days during which artists would cook for the restaurant, often in very experimental fashion. Matta-Clark's meals were widely talked about due to their culinary and performance art interest. In one meal, Matta-Clark served homemade aspic, oxtail soup, and then a "bone platter," which included bones from chicken and beef stuffed with rice and mushrooms, as well as bone marrow.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁶ Diserens, p. 194. This is from an interview with Caroline Goodden.

⁶¹⁷ Randy Kennedy. "When Meals Played the Muse." *The New York Times*. 21 February 2007.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ As unusual as it sounds, bone marrow is sometimes served in restaurants. See Daniel Maurer. "When Did Bone Marrow Become a Menu Must?" (20 March 2009)

After the meal, the bones were cleaned and made into jewelry so that customers could “wear their dinners home.”⁶²⁰ In another meal, Matta-Clark “served live brine shrimp in the hollow of a hard-boiled egg sliced in half. Pretty with parsley, the plates were all set carefully in front of the customers. With great delight Gordon watched the reactions: Jackie Winsor actually ate hers; I think Liza Bear screamed. Some people promptly got up and left; others just stared at the live shrimp.”⁶²¹ All of these examples show the way in which *Food*, as a functional restaurant, combined unfamiliar gastronomy with avant-garde aesthetics.⁶²²

While unconventional, these aesthetic interventions nonetheless generated community – an aesthetic subculture. The restaurant was a gathering place for artists to try out creative ideas with one another. According to Ned Smyth:

The experimental theater company Mabou Mines, the Phillip Glass group, the dancers of Grand Union, and the artists who were involved with the 112 Greene Street exhibition space either worked or hung out there – and Matta-Clark was the catalyst. The restaurant was a central meeting place. For me, too, that experience was something of an epiphany. The openness, research, exploration, camaraderie and energy were unlike anything I've experienced before or since – and Gordon was at the center of it all.⁶²³

In a way similar to Warhol in the Factory, Matta-Clark was a facilitator of aesthetic activity at *Food* as well as at 112 Greene Street, a gallery and performance space with which he was associated. It was a central gathering place and planning spot for artists of

http://newyork.grubstreet.com/2009/03/when_did_bone_marrow_become_tr.html. See also Frank Bruni. “Where to Take Thoreau and Dr. Atkins.” *The New York Times*. 30 March 2005.

⁶²⁰ Diserens, p. 194. This is from an interview with Caroline Goodden.

⁶²¹ Ibid., p. 194. This is from an interview with Caroline Goodden.

⁶²² The restaurant was also where Matta-Clark started his building cuts. According to Crow, “Gordon decided to cut himself a wall sandwich: he cut a horizontal section through the wall and door and fell in love with it. And so the cutting pieces began.” See Crow, p. 44. This would be a crucial turning point for Matta-Clark’s aesthetics and the exploration of impermanence. These building cuts would be the paradigmatic case of Matta-Clark’s works that encountered difficulty in reception and classification.

⁶²³ Ned Smyth. “Gordon Matta-Clark.” <http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/features/smyth/smyth6-4-04.asp>. Accessed 24 February 2011.

all sorts, especially because the gallery's director, Jeffrey Lew, left the doors unlocked so that artists could access it at all hours.⁶²⁴ A wide range of artists worked, played, socialized, and performed at 112 Greene Street including Alice Aycock, Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, the Grand Union Dance Company, Susan Rothenberg, Trisha Brown, Phillip Glass, Mel Bochner, Laurie Anderson, Juan Downey, and William Wegman, among others.⁶²⁵

Between *Food* and 112 Greene Street, Matta-Clark's aesthetic subculture was in full bloom. At both locations, artists gathered to try out new ideas and make art in community with one another. While it was not treated as an explicitly "alternative" exhibition space, 112 Greene Street was nonetheless on the fringes of the traditional artworld. Pamela Lee argues:

[I]t was as much a social space as an artistic one, a place in which artists, dancers, and performers could work and collaborate with little restriction, a place 'that wasn't pristine, one that we could knock about in,' as the late Suzanne Harris recalled. The sculptor Jene Highstein remembers the atmosphere of the early 112 Greene Street in similar terms, emphasizing its alternately democratic or chaotic nature. 'It was a constant kind of social scene,' he notes, '...a way for people to meet and exchange information, almost as though you were living as a family.'⁶²⁶

This is precisely the kind of environment that Matta-Clark gravitated towards time and again, and actively sought to create at *Food*. It was collaborative, familial, permissive, and creative. It was sometimes chaotic, unruly, and even verged on the dangerous in the minds of some.⁶²⁷ One of the least traditional aspects of the space was the way in which exhibitions came about. As Lew recalls, they just sort of happened: "There wasn't really

⁶²⁴ Lee, p. 60.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

a first show there because everybody just arrived.”⁶²⁸ In other words, while Lew served as the official director of the space, the artists really “ran the show” and decided when and how to exhibit their works.⁶²⁹

Throughout this section, I have been making the case that Matta-Clark established an aesthetic subculture. His community is not that of a cult, whose internal expressions are passed over as silence that appears to express no meaningful content. Rather, the visibility of Matta-Clark’s works and their closeness to culture implies at the very least the openness to communication with the culture from which it also seeks distance. Publicist communication is one distinguishing mark of a subculture. So although Matta-Clark’s works were sometimes mysterious, they were nonetheless addressed towards culture in order to foster community. He wanted to affect positive change for communities in disarray by bringing their problems to light and by building new community through art making. To accomplish these goals, Matta-Clark could not utilize isolationist cult expression; he had to communicate with culture in order to try to change it.

Matta-Clark’s art questions the traditional conception of the work and attempts to expand its boundaries to include a wider variety of forms that are admittedly difficult to classify. Here, by traditional, I mean works in established media such as architecture, music, painting, music, sculpture, etc. Matta-Clark primarily challenged architecture and sculpture with building cuts that pushed against and expanded the concepts of these discrete media. He also explored what traditional exhibition spaces do and do not offer to

⁶²⁸ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., p. 62. In this environment, Matta-Clark made several site-specific works including *Winter Garden: Mushroom and Waistbottle Recycling Center*, *Cherry Tree*, and *Time Well*. These works explored organic substances and ephemerality in a different way than did his building cuts.

artists. Matta-Clark utilized spaces such as restaurants, piers, abandoned buildings, as well as gallery spaces like 112 Greene Street, as locations to make and show his work. These locales helped Matta-Clark to explore the relationship between art and life. Arguably, establishing and patrolling this relationship is a central concern of culture, even if culture wants to keep this distinction firmly in place. His desire to blur art and life could be interpreted as a critique of culture as well as a critique of what can be classified as a work of art. Matta-Clark's building cuts and happenings expanded the concept of the work of art and thereby set the new rule to art, as would works of genius.

B. Ephemerality and the Specter of Silencing

At this juncture, I want to return to the question of exclusion in relation to Matta-Clark's work. While I have been focusing upon how he established a subcultural aesthetic community in conjunction with others, it is important to restate why Matta-Clark was working on the fringes of the artworld. His works, particularly the building cuts, were difficult to classify. Were these works of architecture? Were they some sort of deconstructed architecture? Works of "an-architecture"? Were they somewhere in between? Not only were Matta-Clark's building cuts ephemeral – they lasted only until the buildings were demolished – but they were not always authorized projects. Sometimes, as in the case of *Splitting*, he had the permission of the owner to perform his work in and on the structure. In other cases, however, like *Day's End*, Matta-Clark trespassed into the space of an abandoned building and started making cuts into the structure. For this work, Matta-Clark selected an abandoned pier. Because Matta-Clark didn't have permission to work there, he risked arrest and his own safety. So we might say that Matta-Clark's work explored both medial and legal liminality.

The area near Pier 52 off of Gansevoort and West Street in New York City was often frequented by cruisers and hustlers who were looking for a place to hook up or conduct business as well as muggers who were looking for a target to rob.⁶³⁰ While not all the people who hung out at the pier were dangerous, they still may not have wanted to be disturbed by an artist who sought to cut holes out of the pier. In a letter to his friend Wolfgang Becker, Matta-Clark explores his experience at Pier 52:

I totally devoted myself to a working vacation by the water on the Hudson. My 'studio retreat' consisted of appropriating a nearly perfectly intact turn-of-the-century wharf building of steel truss construction having virtually basilical light and proportions. A beautiful shape for such an industrial 'hangar.' Once [I had] secur[ed] the space from other intruders, mainly S&M cruisers, I...spent the next two months working out – that is cutting and working out sections of dock 10-18" thick, roof, walls and heavy steel trusswork.⁶³¹

Because Matta-Clark was trespassing on the property and altering the structure of the pier, he risked arrest. But he also risked his life in the process. While Matta-Clark was trained in architecture, challenges to structural integrity were always crucial to his working process. In all of his unauthorized building cuts, Matta-Clark faced dangers because of the degradation of the buildings he worked on, the degree of which might be difficult to ascertain in some cases.

Matta-Clark and his assistants continually trespassed into the pier to work, even after being discovered by the "authorities." The idea of working on the fringes, creating something beautiful and ephemeral that would engender community, appealed to Matta-Clark. But he was also disrupting the current configuration of community in the process. As Lee puts the point:

⁶³⁰ Ibid., p. 120-121.

⁶³¹ Ibid., p. 121. The letter was from Gordon Matta-Clark to Wolfgang Becker, Aachen, Germany, and is dated September 8, 1975. See Lee's endnote #16, p. 257.

While the production of the work was physically demanding, its reception was enmeshed in an equally trying bureaucratic scenario. A few days prior to the completion of the piece, Matta-Clark's illegal activities were discovered by a city worker, most likely from the Department of Sanitation. Efforts to lock up the space were repeatedly transgressed by the artist and his assistants, but when Matta-Clark finally held an opening at the pier on August 27, the event was closed down by authorities from the New York City Economic Development Administration. In the months that followed, an investigation against the artist was launched by the EDA, with the threat of litigation mounting. In his defense, Matta-Clark and his supporters claimed the work to be part of the 'public domain' and suggested further that it represented an artistic contribution to a 'decaying city.'⁶³²

Even in this context, Matta-Clark frames the project in terms of community formation through aesthetic experience. Matta-Clark continued working on the project in spite of its being illegal. But he left New York "shortly after the work was discovered but this was because he was scheduled to produce the site work *Conical Intersect* for the Paris Biennale in early September."⁶³³ While the charges against Matta-Clark were later dropped, he was momentarily regarded as a fugitive because of the controversy surrounding *Day's End*.

Nonetheless, according to Joel Shapiro, who experienced *Day's End*:

The pier was probably the most successful of the pieces I saw. It was a mysterious, decrepit place – a huge space – and the cuts had a certain scale. It was frightening. I recalled thinking, whose building is this? It is dangerous... To go into an abandoned place and chop it up – I don't know what I thought about that. The destructive aspect, [...] [t]he willful aspect, I don't know. The piece was dangerous to the viewer. It was large; it had scale. He was creating some kind of edge – flirting with some sort of abyss. It wasn't like the earthworks of the same time.⁶³⁴

Shapiro's emotionally jumbled reaction speaks to the difficulty of comprehending the work. Lee argues that the cuts made into the pier were actually rather simple in

⁶³² Ibid., p. 121-123. The negative involvement of authorities and bureaucracy resonates with the difficult reception of Serra's *Tilted Arc* as discussed in Chapter Four. The irony here is that *Tilted Arc* was both commissioned by power and rendered asunder by it.

⁶³³ Ibid., footnote #17, p. 257.

⁶³⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

comparison with other projects by Matta-Clark. Nonetheless, the effect of the work was close to sublime because of its overall enormity and the placement of the cuts and what they revealed.⁶³⁵ One was “a nine-foot wide cut in the floor that ran seventy feet in length, bisecting the width of the space. Admitting a view of the water below, a drop of at least ten feet, it was echoed by a ‘sail-like’ shape carved out from the roof above.”⁶³⁶ This cut was crucial to establishing the depth of the space; it prevented viewers from forgetting that they were actually on the water.

Based upon the placement of the cuts as well as the passage of time (and sun), the work had a strikingly different appearance at different times of day. According to Lee, “Paradoxically, it was at the *end* of the day – at the day’s exhaustion, so to speak – that the work was most vibrant, most suffused with light. Thus the falling of light in the space was allegorically charged as well. For its passage within *Day’s End* was structurally coincident with the building’s historical passage into outmodedness, illuminating the twilight of the pier itself.”⁶³⁷

Day’s End brings together Matta-Clark’s concerns of community and impermanence with a work that is difficult to comprehend in the Kantian sense of the term. Viewers were unable to “wrap their minds around” the work and to conceptualize it easily. This led to some frightened reactions like Shapiro’s. Moreover, the difficulty in classification and categorization of the work led to questions about the status of project as a work of art that contributed to its difficult reception. While all art poses a cognitive and communicative challenge and a demand that we respond to it, in cases where

⁶³⁵ For a full discussion of the relation of *Day’s End* to the Kantian sublime, see Lee, pp. 137-161.

⁶³⁶ Lee, p. 123.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

categorization is difficult, these challenges are intensified. Therefore, the demands of such works are more difficult to meet. The fugitive nature of Matta-Clark's constructions, in combination with their liminality, means that only subcultures can provide a suitable context for apprehending them.

Summary

Matta-Clark expanded the concept of the work of art through happenings like *Food* and *Pig Roast* as well as his building cut projects. His exploratory art generated a subcultural community interested in his expression. All of his works required the involvement of the audience in some sense – whether that meant consuming a meal together or traversing the gaps and cuts through a building. The communities that gathered for these works and events were interested in questions of ephemerality and community and actively sought to come together to experience them. However, the challenging nature of the works made their reception difficult. At times, Matta-Clark's works were hard to categorize. Were they sculptures? Works of architecture? Happenings? Were they art at all? Such category questions, coupled with the transitory nature of the works, reinforce the way in which Matta-Clark's projects were on the fringes of expression. The difficulty in categorization contributed to the subcultural reception of the work.

VI. David Lynch

As we have seen in the cases of Warhol and Matta-Clark, artists who exhibit genius can garner either cult or subcultural followings. That is, works of genius do not dictate one type of community alone. Rather, much depends upon the goals of the work

and the type of group that is interested in contemplating and discussing it in community with others. To apply this distinction, we must consider how much pressure is being placed upon these expressions and how much acceptance they receive both initially and over time. Works of genius may set the rule to art, but this rule is only discernable retrospectively.

In the case of Warhol, we saw the trajectory of his reception move from cult to subculture as his work was embraced by the artworld and his production came to involve the participation of others at the Factory. In the case of Matta-Clark, his interests in community revitalization, happenings, and works that required the participation of an audience led to the formation of aesthetic communities that can be categorized as subcultures. In the case of David Lynch, the question, “Cult or Subculture?” may produce radically different answers, depending upon which work we take to be our focal point. We can trace a trajectory similar to Warhol’s in Lynch’s career. It took some time for him to make his first feature film. *Eraserhead* exemplifies the lengths he would go to produce a labor of love on a shoestring budget, a labor that turned Lynch into a cult icon. Thereafter, his films experienced moments of reception indicative of both cult and subculture throughout his career.

In Chapter One, I focused upon the Wittgensteinian resonances of Lynch’s *Blue Velvet*. Here, I highlight the aesthetic communities that grew up around some of his works, particularly *Eraserhead* and *Twin Peaks*. There is much to be said about Lynch’s transition from a cult director who creatively managed with a small and dedicated crew to a more mainstream director who flirted with the Hollywood system. The importance of this trajectory lies in the fact that, regardless of how close he came to mainstream

production, Lynch still sought editorial control of his projects. Without the power of final cut, Lynch found that he could not wholeheartedly stand behind projects that were reworked or mercilessly cut by the studios without his input or permission. As such, although the financial backing of Hollywood might seem to present a temptation, Lynch preferred to maintain his own vision, even if this decision meant that his work would only reach and appeal to a smaller, cult audience.

Dune is the clearest case of Lynch's loss of editorial control. While it was the best-financed of Lynch's projects, his lack of creative control left a bitter taste in his mouth. He even tried to remove his name from the film. According to Lynch, "*Dune* was like a kind of studio film. I didn't have final cut. And, little by little, I was subconsciously making compromises – knowing I couldn't go here and not wanting to go there. I just fell, you know, into this middle world. It was a sad place to be."⁶³⁸ Lynch couldn't fully execute his own vision for the project because of the constraints of Frank Herbert's source novel and the strong personalities of Dino and Rafaella De Laurentiis, the producers of the project.⁶³⁹ In response to a question about creative control of projects that cost millions of dollars, Lynch replied:

Where there's money involved, there's always tension and worry. The more money, the more worry. And you can understand that. The best attitude for the money people would be, if you're going to make a film with this director, sit down at the very beginning and talk enough so that you feel good about whatever it is. Then go with them and support them; see it through to the very end in that spirit. It gets tougher and tougher towards the end because, in the beginning, it can be anything. And in the end it is, you know, what it is.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁸ Chris Rodley, ed. *Lynch on Lynch*. London, UK: Faber and Faber Limited, 1997., p. 120.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123-124.

Because he felt that he had to deliver a film in line with de Laurentiis's expectations, Lynch wasn't able to fully realize his vision for the production, even though no expense was spared.⁶⁴¹ Rather than feeling greater freedom due to the generous financing of the production, Lynch felt greater pressure to conform.⁶⁴²

This lesson about maintaining creative control would stay with Lynch throughout his career; he would never again relinquish the right to final cut. Even though *Dune* was not a financial or creative success by any means, it still led to *Blue Velvet*.⁶⁴³ As the story goes, Lynch managed to secure backing for the project from De Laurentiis despite the debacle of *Dune*. Part of the deal was that Lynch would retain creative control over *Blue Velvet*, but that he had to take a pay cut for his work and a budget cut for the project.⁶⁴⁴ Even while working within the Hollywood system, Lynch would go on to make his films on smaller budgets in order to maintain control. The importance of control also meant that Lynch produced and financed his projects when possible with his company, Asymmetrical Productions, and that he sometimes worked with smaller studios like Studio+Canal and CIBY in France.⁶⁴⁵

In an everyday sense, we can say that Lynch's work has a cult following – a small, self-selecting group of individuals appreciate his work and his vision of the world. In the

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., p. 123-124 and p. 108.

⁶⁴² Lynch had been hired on the basis of *The Elephant Man*, which is a remarkably different film from *Eraserhead*. According to Lynch, "When Dino and I first talked, he had not seen *Eraserhead*, so there were a lot of things in my head he didn't know about. When he finally saw the film, in fact, he hated it. In some ways I knew I'd have to hold back. For one thing, the film had to be a PG. You can think of some strange things to do, but as soon as they throw in a PG, a lot of them go out the window. And you know, I kinda like to go off track, to go off in a strange direction, but I wasn't able to do that." See Rodley, p. 113-114.

⁶⁴³ Martha Nochimson. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, p. 123.

⁶⁴⁴ Rodley, p. 136-137.

⁶⁴⁵ David Foster Wallace. "David Lynch Keeps His Head." In *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1997., p. 146.

stronger sense alluded to in Chapter Four, Lynch's cult involves a devoted fan-base who seek to understand his work through communication with other people who are similarly interested and devoted. The cult of Lynch is based not only upon the now seemingly standard process of making, reproducing, and distributing films, but also upon the community building that new technologies have made possible. Midnight movie screenings of *Eraserhead* and VHS recording / watching parties of *Twin Peaks* show that the cult of Lynch longed to experience the work with one another and to discuss it together afterwards.

The communication within the cult of Lynch expanded with the rise of the Internet. Not only did it take place around the water cooler at work on the day after viewings, but also in Internet newsgroups, the online equivalent of message and discussion boards, and later on fanpages, blogs, and in chatrooms. The early rumblings of social media allowed even the farthest flung of Lynch cult members to communicate with one another over the Internet.⁶⁴⁶ This virtual community, like the local ones, was united by the desire to exchange judgments of taste with one another regarding Lynch's complicated and mysterious art. Both the virtual and local communities were interested in contemplating and discussing Lynch's works of genius with one another, even when their mainstream popularity waned, as in the case of *Twin Peaks*. It almost seems as though the cult of Lynch was made possible when general interest in his work flagged. At this point, the cult of Lynch emerged online with an obsessive interest in discussing the minute details of *Twin Peaks*. Online, the group could compare notes about the series

⁶⁴⁶ I will discuss newsgroups in more detail momentarily.

and even trade video recordings of episodes with others who had missed them during their television broadcast.

We can see the cult following for Lynch's works more clearly against the background of the difficulty in critical reception that his works encountered. At times, critics didn't know what to say about Lynch's work. Some retreated to what they considered the safe ground of regarding Lynch as a "sicko." Such critics judged his work as strange, immoral, or reprehensible, and then rejected it out of hand without troubling themselves much to consider its merits.⁶⁴⁷ A notable exception to this rule is the critical work of David Foster Wallace. In "David Lynch Keeps His Head," he presents a more nuanced view of Lynch's work and his relationship to morality or "sickness." He states:

Pauline Kael has a famous epigram to her 1986 *New Yorker* review of *Blue Velvet*: she quotes somebody she left the theater behind as saying to a friend 'Maybe I'm sick, but I want to see that again.' And Lynch's movies are indeed – in all sorts of ways, some more interesting than others – 'sick.' Some of them are brilliant and unforgettable; others are jejune and incoherent and bad. It's no wonder that Lynch's critical reputation over the last decade has looked like an EKG: it's sometimes hard to tell whether the director's a genius or an idiot. [...] If the word *sick* seems excessive to you, simply substitute the word *creepy*. Lynch's movies are inarguably creepy, and a big part of their creepiness is that they seem so *personal*.⁶⁴⁸

Due to their perversity, Lynch's works have sometimes been rejected or panned by critics and the mainstream public. Upon one interpretation, this troublesome reception has relegated Lynch to the fringes of the Hollywood community. However, an alternative interpretation of Lynch's comportment towards mainstream filmmaking and funding is that even though over time his films have gained more acceptance, Lynch nonetheless

⁶⁴⁷ Jeff Johnson's *Pervert in the Pulpit: Morality in the Works of David Lynch* is one example of this phenomenon. This tired line of argumentation has become a go-to for critics who do not want to think through or reconsider the works and what they might have to offer to the viewer. See Jeff Johnson. *Pervert in the Pulpit: Morality in the Works of David Lynch*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004.

⁶⁴⁸ Wallace, p. 166, emphasis in original.

chooses to work on his own terms. He does this in order to be free from the expectations and restrictions of the Hollywood machine. Rather than being forced out of Hollywood, it means that Lynch voluntarily locates himself and his work outside of it.

A. *Eraserhead*

In contrast to the big budget production of *Dune*, *Eraserhead* was made on a shoestring budget and based upon the work ethic and dedication of Lynch and his close-knit crew. The core of this production team was “cameraman Herbert Cardwell (later to be replaced by Frederick Elmes), soundman Alan Splet, Catherine Coulson (in a multitude of roles), production manager / props person Doreen Small and actor Jack Nance.”⁶⁴⁹ Many of these individuals would go on to comprise the stable of Lynch’s closest associates on his film and television projects. Notably, Catherine Coulson and Jack Nance would both go on to star in *Twin Peaks* and other projects. It took five years for this film family to complete *Eraserhead*, which sometimes involved cobbling props and set-pieces together from spare parts picked from trash heaps when the production ran out of money.⁶⁵⁰ According to Rodley:

[Peggy Reavey] recalls one particular night, during hard times in Philadelphia, when Lynch needed a shower head, a curtain and some very particular nuts and bolts for a shot. It was already 2 a.m.: ‘It was trash night, so he went out and picked through all the trash cans in this little alley and came back with every single thing he needed. [...] He is incredibly resourceful and determined, and has

⁶⁴⁹ Rodley, p. 55.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74. According to Lynch, “It was horrifying. Yet I like talking about *Eraserhead* because it pulls me back into one of the most beautiful times. And great memories. But in between, when we ran out of money, I was always amazed that so many things held for the film. Jack’s hair didn’t suddenly change, and the stables and the American Film Institute were still there. There was one shot where Henry walks down the hall, turns the doorknob and a year and a half later he comes through the door! Those things can be extremely frightening, to think about holding a mood and a correctness, something that will stick together after five years. It’s pretty hard.” See Rodley, p. 74.

this amazing creative energy to pull things together so that they work. He always had the sense that things were possible.⁶⁵¹

The sheer dedication of Lynch and his crew, combined with a make-it-work aesthetic, helped see the project through to its completion.

When asked by Chris Rodley how he sustained interest and enthusiasm in the project, Lynch replied, “It was the world. In my mind it was a world between a factory and a factory neighborhood. A little, unknown, twisted, almost silent lost spot where little details and little torments existed. And people were struggling in darkness. They’re living in those fringelands, and they’re the people I really love [...] I always say it’s my *Philadelphia Story*. It just doesn’t have Jimmy Stewart in it!”⁶⁵² As though employing the Wittgensteinian idea of new boroughs directly, Lynch comments upon the outskirts or fringelands of Philadelphia in a loving way. His description of *Eraserhead*’s setting could equally apply to Lynch’s own squalid living conditions among the spectral remainders of disused urban factories. At times, Lynch even took up residence at the stables of the American Film Institute Centre for Advanced Film Studies while working on the project.⁶⁵³ According to Rodley, “Lynch’s attachment to the film is part of an obvious affection for the people, the times, and for a particular *way* of making cinema – the slow way. All the more reason, perhaps, to preserve its essential mysteries.”⁶⁵⁴

One of the enduring mysteries about *Eraserhead* regards how the “baby” was made. Lynch has refused on several occasions to describe this process, instead offering

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., p. 55.

⁶⁵² Ibid., p. 55-56.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., p. 60.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 55, emphasis in original. Reflecting upon the process of making *Eraserhead*, Lynch states, “I feel now that I shouldn’t have spent so much time on *Eraserhead*. I should like to have made more films in that time, but it wasn’t happening. It was extremely frustrating to hold on to everything for so long. I couldn’t do anything new because *Eraserhead* wasn’t finished. I didn’t have anything to show anybody. So I just saw the world going by and tried to raise money and, little by little, I did it.” See Rodley, p. 75.

statements like “it was born nearby” or “maybe it was found.”⁶⁵⁵ While on the surface such statements seem to be red herrings, they are accurate in the sense that the baby was born or found in Lynch’s imagination. Lynch states:

Certain things are just so beautiful to me, and I don’t know why. Certain things make so much sense, and it’s hard to explain. I *felt Eraserhead*, I didn’t think it. It was a quiet process: going from inside me to the screen. I’d get something on film, get it paced a certain way, add the right sounds, and then I’d be able to say if it worked or not. Now, just to get to that point, there’s a million times more talking. And in Hollywood, if you can’t write your ideas down, or if you can’t pitch them or if they’re so abstract they can’t be pitched properly, then they don’t have a chance of surviving. Abstract things are important to a film, but very few people get the chance to really go all out with cinema. Creations are an extension of yourself, and you go out on a limb whenever you create anything. It’s a risk.⁶⁵⁶

Lynch feels that talking too much about a film ruins its mysteries by unraveling abstract ideas and images and explaining them to death. As one critic commented after viewing *Eraserhead*, it is a movie “to be experienced rather than explained.”⁶⁵⁷ Lynch’s statements are versions of the Kantian view that the artist who is endowed with genius cannot fully explain the aesthetic ideas present in her works. Insofar as Lynch claims that he felt rather than thought *Eraserhead*, his explanations are not fully rational or logical. As Peggy Reavey puts the point, “If [Lynch] could tell you what his movies are about, they wouldn’t be about that.”⁶⁵⁸

In addition to Lynch’s inability to explain the source of his ideas and imagery, he also seeks to preserve some of the mysteries of the production. Lynch is the keeper of secrets who helps maintain or even stokes the desire for knowledge on the part of audiences (particularly cult members) through his inability and refusal to explain the

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 54, p. 77-78. Lynch has expressed a desire to maintain some of the mystery of his films. From his point of view, talking too much about how they were made would detract from the viewing experience.

⁶⁵⁶ Rodley, p. 64, emphasis in original.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 54.

works in detail. This makes him a Benjaminian cult-priest of sorts. Rather than destroy the mysteries of his films by talking too much about them, Lynch insists that the works be experienced firsthand. The unavailability of specific answers to questions about the baby or other curious aspects of *Eraserhead*, among other projects, requires the audience to explore the work together with others. This means that although Lynch cannot to say too much regarding his own work, he does want his audiences to discuss it, to exchange judgments of taste, and to trade theories with one another.

Lynch's attraction to abstract images leaves room for multiple interpretations and provides fodder for cultic-aesthetic discussion.⁶⁵⁹ He expands upon this idea by saying:

Everybody and his little brother now knows how things are done. Just like finding out the house wasn't on Sunset Boulevard. Or like *Cliffhanger*. More people have seen how they did the helicopter shot in that than people have seen the movie! Magicians keep their secrets to themselves. And they know that as soon as they tell, someone will say, 'Are you *kidding* me? That's so simple.' It's *horrifying* to me, that they do that. People don't realize it, but as soon as they hear or see that, something dies inside them. They're deader than they were. They're not, like, happy to know about this stuff. They're happy *not* to know about it. And they *shouldn't* know about it. It's nothing to do with the film! And will only *ruin* the film! Why would they talk about it? It's *horrifying!*⁶⁶⁰

Part of what interests Lynch viewers is the establishment of the strange, off-kilter, or unusual. Showing how all of the effects were accomplished, as Lynch notes above, would detract from their magic or from their ability to affect the viewer as strange.

Here's the plot of *Eraserhead*: Henry Spencer, the protagonist, is undergoing stressful life changes when his girlfriend, Mary X, becomes pregnant and gives birth to a premature baby. However, the child might be better described as a creature rather than a human baby. The couple struggle to care for the difficult to soothe baby and are soon at

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 63.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 78, emphasis in original.

their wit's end. When Mary, unable to cope with the situation, moves back in with her parents, Henry is left to care for the baby alone. Ultimately, Henry cannot handle the situation, and he kills the child. While this précis sketches the events of the film, it does little to describe the aesthetic meaning of *Eraserhead*, which depends upon mysterious and / or obscure imagery to generate a feeling of danger, darkness, and surreality. Lynch himself describes *Eraserhead* as a "night-time film."⁶⁶¹ For instance, in between the key plot points, Lynch weaves images of "the Planet," an industrial setting where levers are pulled, the Lady in the Radiator, a woman with gigantic, deformed cheeks who sings to Henry about how everything is fine in heaven and who sometimes crushes spermatozoa-like creatures beneath her dancing shoes, a traumatic meal at the X family home where the conversation is strained and where miniature artificial chickens pulsate and bleed profusely as Henry tries to carve them, Henry's head popping off and being taken to a factory where it will be made into erasers for pencils, etc. Adding descriptions of such imagery to the précis of the film does little to convey how the images work in context or what feeling they evoke for audiences. The surreality of the images, which contributes to the uneasy feeling that audiences experience, remains to be felt by seeing the film.

At its initial release, many didn't know what to make of Lynch's nightmarish film. At Cannes, *Eraserhead* played to an empty theater and it was rejected from the New York Film Festival. It finally found a place at the Los Angeles Film Festival, but it received unfavorable reviews.⁶⁶² *Variety* reviewed the film and described it as "a sickening bad-taste exercise."⁶⁶³ In screenings prior to the release of the project, the

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶⁶² Ibid., p. 83.

⁶⁶³ <http://listverse.com/2009/04/26/top-10-classic-midnight-movies/>

financial backer of Terrence Malick saw several scenes. During the middle of the screening, he stood up and screamed, “PEOPLE DON’T ACT LIKE THAT! PEOPLE DON’T TALK LIKE THAT! THIS IS BULLSHIT!,”⁶⁶⁴ and then stormed out.

While many initial reactions to the film were puzzled or negative, *Eraserhead* eventually became a staple of the midnight movie circuit. According to Lynch, “It played seventeen cities regularly. And in those days, which is unfortunately not the case now, midnight screenings were really strong. So at the Nuart here in LA, for instance, it played for four years. It only played one night a week, but every day of the week it was on the marquee. So whether people had seen it or not it became known over four years.”⁶⁶⁵ *Eraserhead* continues to enjoy a spot in midnight movie lineups across the country and has achieved the level of cult status.⁶⁶⁶ According to Manohla Dargis of *The New York Times*, *Eraserhead* is “an amazing, still mysterious work.”⁶⁶⁷ It is important to note that Dargis responds favorably to the work thirty years after *Eraserhead*’s release. It is doubtful that had she reviewed the film upon its initial release in 1977 she would have received it so positively. Again, this points to the way in which the rules set by works of genius can only be understood retrospectively. In her Critic’s Notebook on *Eraserhead*, she comments more carefully on the film’s imagery. She states:

The black-and-white world of “Eraserhead” disturbs, seduces and even shocks with images that are alternately discomfoting, even physically off-putting, and

⁶⁶⁴ Rodley, p. 82.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 84.

⁶⁶⁶ I say achieved the level of cult status because this term indicates *Eraserhead*’s difficulties – from its five-year making to its eventual release and near-failure. I could equally have said “sunk” to the level of cult status in order to indicate the relatively small number of viewers and fans the film has garnered over time. But because *Eraserhead* has garnered the praise of critics over the years and the film (and others in Lynch’s oeuvre) has influenced other artists and directors, I count *Eraserhead*’s cult status as a success. In 2004, *the National Film Registry, part of the Library of Congress, selected Eraserhead for preservation.*

⁶⁶⁷ Manohla Dargis. “Distorted, Distorting and All-Too Human: Critic’s Notebook: *Eraserhead*.” *The New York Times*. 7 December 2007.

characterized by what André Breton called convulsive beauty. It also amuses, in its own weird way, with scenes of preposterous, macabre comedy, among them a memorable family dinner involving a cooked bird that wiggles obscenely on its plate while it gushes forth a menacing dark liquid. Like Henry's vexing baby, this pathetic creature seems to have sprung from Mr. Lynch's head like a messenger from another planet. If you pay close enough attention, you just might hear what it's saying.⁶⁶⁸

Here Dargis points to the importance of Brechtian attentive reception on the part of audiences. She suggests that paying attention to the work will help the viewer understand it better; this is crucial due to the complexity of *Eraserhead*. Along these lines, Dargis obliquely refers to Lynch's genius by suggesting that the work is unlike others, coming as if from another planet entirely – the planet where Lynch's cult lives.

We might extend this thought to suggest that the demand issued by *Eraserhead* comes forth all the more strongly because the film is more difficult to understand than run-of-the-mill commercial films. *Eraserhead* requires more careful examination on the part of viewers to make sense of it. For this reason, the small group of people interested in this task has come together to form the cult of Lynch. The modes of distribution of mechanical reproduction have promoted the cult value of Lynch's works by making them increasingly available to a scattered public. However, because the work is so difficult to comprehend, this public remains small and self-selecting. The individuals comprising the cult desire to understand Lynch's works more deeply by communicating about them with other cult members. In the case of *Eraserhead*, the cult of Lynch views and reviews the film together at midnight screenings. In the next section of argument, I expand upon the notion of online aesthetic communities in relationship not to a movie, but to a television series.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

B. *Twin Peaks*

Twin Peaks is about the tragic death of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee), high school student, homecoming queen, and Meals on Wheels volunteer. In the first episode of the series, her body washes up on the shore of a riverbank, wrapped in plastic.⁶⁶⁹ As the town mourns Laura's passing, the mystery of "Who Killed Laura Palmer?" begins to unfold. FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) is sent to investigate matters and with the help of local law enforcement, becomes embroiled with the intrigues of this small town set back in the Douglas firs of Washington State. As Laura's mystery unfolds, the trail leads through the overlapping secrets of several Twin Peaks residents. Everyone has something to hide and many of these revelations lead down dark roads both natural and supernatural. As one character comments later on in the series, "the owls are not what they seem."⁶⁷⁰ This comment could be equally applied to any of the seemingly innocent residents of Twin Peaks.

In many ways, *Twin Peaks* is a soap opera serial that intermixes law enforcement drama with mystery, science fiction, and horror. Instead of adhering to any of these genres strictly, the show often twists their conventions and performs playful but gentle parodies of them. For instance, the show breaks with the stereotype of the rational-to-a-fault male detective. Early on in the series, Agent Cooper utilizes mysticism and Tibetan Buddhism in order to close in on the killer.⁶⁷¹ Cooper, it turns out, is a seeker in touch

⁶⁶⁹ A fanzine about the show would later be titled *Wrapped in Plastic* because of this important detail.

⁶⁷⁰ Major Garland Briggs makes this statement in reference to a top secret Air Force mission called Project Blue Book. In particular, this mission involves supernatural or extraterrestrial life.

⁶⁷¹ Episode two develops this aspect of Cooper's character. After giving his new colleagues in Twin Peaks a brief history of Tibet, he begins to describe a deductive technique he discovered in a dream. Cooper then instructs the sheriff to intone each name on a blackboard and give a description of their relationship to Laura Palmer. If Cooper breaks the glass bottle by throwing a stone, he conjectures, the killer will be found. See <http://www.lychnet.com/tp/tp02.html> for a transcription of episode two.

with his emotions.⁶⁷² Moreover, the addition of supernatural and horror elements to the plotlines breaks with standard police procedurals.⁶⁷³ Perhaps the most parodic aspect of *Twin Peaks* deals with its soap operatic elements. The melodramatic storylines on *Twin Peaks* involving murder, multiple love affairs, drug addiction, kidnapping, and abuse were mirrored by a series within the series entitled *An Invitation to Love* which utilized traditional tropes from soap operas and heightened them to the level of absurdity.

The kind of community that formed around *Twin Peaks* in the early nineties is akin to the community spurred by *Eraserhead* who met at midnight screenings of the film. In particular, the face-to-face meeting among friends at watching parties and post-viewing analysis and discussion sessions maintained the kind of attentive interest that the midnight screenings held for the fans of *Eraserhead*. With *Twin Peaks*, David Lynch's work was making its way from the big to the small screen and into the intimate confines of the living room. While the viewing audiences for *Eraserhead* and *Twin Peaks* shared much in common, it is worth noting that with the rise of VCR and Internet technologies expanded the distributive reach of the cult of Lynch.

During season one, *Twin Peaks* enjoyed more general viewership and popularity than had any Lynch project to date.⁶⁷⁴ In 1990, the show was one of the highest rated and

⁶⁷² See Nochimson, Chapter Three.

⁶⁷³ This genre combination would be echoed in television shows like *The X-Files* and *Fringe*.

⁶⁷⁴ In an interview with Chris Rodley, Lynch discussed his reaction to the popularity of series: "Chris Rodley: It must have been intriguing to know that *Twin Peaks* was being seen by so many people, compared to a movie in the cinema. Does that matter to you? David Lynch: See, these figures are based on a falsehood, so you can never tell if it's true. So right away you've got to question everything. But it's still way more people than go to my films. It was a surprise to me that so many people got into that show. It was really a pleasant surprise." See Rodley, p. 176. Lynch felt both warm excitement and a healthy level of suspicion regarding this popularity. He continues: "It's nice when people really like something you've done, but it's sort of like love, in that it seems inevitable that people reach the point where they've had enough of you and they fall for the next thing. You're helpless to control that process, and the awareness of it is like a dull ache. It's not like a sharp pain – it's like a little bit of a heartache, and that heartache is about the fact that we're living in the *Home Alone* age. Art houses are dying. What we have instead are

viewed series during that year. In addition to its popularity in America, several other countries including Japan, France, and Germany were transfixed by *Twin Peaks* and the mystery of “Who Killed Laura Palmer?” In explanation of the series’ popularity, Robert Engels, a writer for the show, commented, “It was a TV show about free-floating guilt. Something was captured there that people responded to emotionally. Also, the characters in *Twin Peaks* were so *real*. Other shows lack that.”⁶⁷⁵ The show drew its viewers in. It was as if the show was always on the tip of people’s tongues, especially on Friday mornings after Thursday night’s latest episode aired. Practically everyone was talking about the show around the watercooler – and it was a sign of your hipness if you were able to participate in these discussions and debate minute plot points with others at work.⁶⁷⁶ In addition to its popularity among viewers, critics also embraced the first season of *Twin Peaks*; it was nominated for several Golden Globe and Emmy Awards, ultimately winning two and three, respectively.⁶⁷⁷

The popular interest in *Twin Peaks* in the early 1990s could indicate the existence of something like a “mass cult.” Viewers and critics alike enjoyed the show. *Twin Peaks* won several prestigious awards and the hearts of millions. But this seems to present a contradiction in terms. How can a mass participate in cult behavior, especially if cults are marked by isolationist communication? How can the revered focal point of the cult be recognized as having popular importance? It is difficult to say what factors converged

mall cinemas showing twelve pictures and those are the pictures people see. Television has lowered the level and made a certain thing popular. That TV thing moves fast, doesn’t have a lot of substance, has a laugh track and that’s all.” See Rodley, p. 177.

⁶⁷⁵ Rodley, p. 156, emphasis in original.

⁶⁷⁶ Bill Carter. “The Media Business: *Twin Peaks* May Provide Ratings Edge for ABC.” *The New York Times*. 16 April 1990. According to Alan Wurtzel, ABC’s senior vice-president of research, the popularity of the show was fueled, in part, by the desire to fit in at work during conversations about the show. He called it the “watercooler syndrome.”

⁶⁷⁷ See the entry for *Twin Peaks* on IMDB for further details. (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098936/>)

to make *Twin Peaks* the kind of work that could garner mass interest. Perhaps the mystery of “Who Killed Laura Palmer” was enough to invite the kind of intense scrutiny and desire to know more that marks cult interest in an object or a work. However, this mass-interest was unsustainable, especially after the central mystery of the show was solved. It is my contention that the true cult of Lynch emerged during the show’s declining critical and popular viewership. True cult members still found value in *Twin Peaks* after the mystery was solved and continued to discuss the intricacies of the show with one another in *Twin Peaks* newsgroups. I will return to this point momentarily.

To continue, during the height of its popularity, people held viewing parties at the local level in order to enjoy *Twin Peaks* with one another. Because the watching parties were jovial occasions, friends would stay long into the night discussing what they had seen that night and how the events related to the progression of the show, and particularly, to the mystery regarding Laura Palmer. These conversations were wide-ranging, and sometimes included references to avant-garde filmmaking and fine art. In advanced cases, people took advantage of VHS technology in order to tape *Twin Peaks* so that they could re-watch the episodes and repeat single scenes multiple times. When beneficial, people also used slow motion to help decipher minute details.⁶⁷⁸ According to Umberto Eco, such dissection on the part of audiences helps qualify an object as cult:

The work must be loved, obviously, but this is not enough. It must provide a completely furnished world, a world about which one can make up quizzes and play trivia games so that the adepts of the sect recognize through each other a shared expertise [...] I think that in order to transform a work into a cult object

⁶⁷⁸ For an in-depth discussion of the lengths *Twin Peaks* viewers would go to decipher the series see David Lavery. “Introduction: The Semiotics of *Cobbler: Twin Peaks*’ Interpretive Community.” In *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*. Ed. David Lavery. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1995. See also Henry Jenkins. “‘Do You Enjoy Making the Rest of Us Feel Stupid?’: alt.tv.twinpeaks, the Trickster Author, and Viewer Mastery.” In *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*. Ed. David Lavery. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1995.

one must be able to break, dislocate, unhinge it so that one can remember only parts of it, irrespective of their original relationship with the whole.⁶⁷⁹

This is precisely the sort of activity that members of the cult of Lynch participated in when obsessively viewing and reviewing episodes of *Twin Peaks* in order to understand them more fully.

While taping episodes using a VCR and watching in slow motion might seem mundane in the age of TiVo and access to television episodes online directly after they air, the use of VCRs was crucial to the original *Twin Peakers*. In “Do You Enjoy Making the Rest of Us Feel Stupid?": alt.tv.twin-peaks, the Trickster Author, and Viewer Mastery,” Henry Jenkins states, “As one fan remarked just a few weeks into the series’ second season, ‘Can you imagine *Twin Peaks* coming out before VCRs or without the net? It would have been Hell!’[...] Another explained, ‘Video-recording has made it possible to treat film like a manuscript, to be pored over and deciphered.’”⁶⁸⁰ While the Internet as we know it today didn’t exist yet, Usenet and newsgroups made it possible for individuals in different locations to discuss topics of common interest from afar.⁶⁸¹

The VCR and primitive net technologies might have seemed an improbable avenue for the generation and maintenance of community and community identity because of their distant and virtual aspects. However, the Internet allows otherwise distant individuals to be in close contact with one another. While a fan in California and one in New York couldn’t normally sit down together to watch an episode of *Twin Peaks* and to talk about it afterwards, they can sit down and communicate their aesthetic experiences and their judgments of taste with one another online. With the increasing

⁶⁷⁹ Umberto Eco. “*Casablanca*: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage.” In *Travels in Hyper Reality*. Trans. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Publishers, 1983., p. 198.

⁶⁸⁰ Jenkins, p. 54.

⁶⁸¹ I will discuss the newsgroup alt.tv.twin-peaks in more detail momentarily.

popularity of the Internet and social media, the demands of aesthetic communities can now be met regardless of locale. One might object that the technologies that permit these communities to come together from afar force the cults to become disaggregated. However, in spite of the distance, I claim that these communities are still cults united by their shared interest in *Twin Peaks*. Instead of weakening these communities due to distance, technology makes these cults possible.

Thinkers like Robert Asen argue against technology's suitability for deliberative communication on the grounds that participants are not reflective in such situations.⁶⁸²

However, the popularity of newsgroups about *Twin Peaks* prove the contrary:

The Internet, in those days before the World Wide Web, was dominated by 'Usenet,' the worldwide newsgroup system. Almost overnight from the April 8, 1990 broadcast of the "Twin Peaks" pilot episode, the alt.tv.twin-peaks newsgroup was created and became one of the most active, as hundreds of postings were made each week, as participants attempted to unravel the mysteries of the latest episode.⁶⁸³

Participants in the series' online community displayed a mastery of the show and hotly debated interpretive issues with one another. Instead of unreflective ramblings typed and sent out into the universe for all to see, members of the *Twin Peaks* newsgroup constructed careful and thoughtful posts based upon multiple viewings of a single episode or scene. They were real devotees in the cult of *Twin Peaks*.

Twin Peaks' online community took the aforementioned face-to-face exchange of judgments of taste and the careful dissection of episodes together to a new level of complexity. Alt.tv.twin-peaks was formed within weeks of the series' premiere; the popularity of *Twin Peaks* was mirrored by the popularity of its newsgroups. According

⁶⁸² Asen, p. 425.

⁶⁸³ <http://www.twinpeaks.org/colophon.htm>

to Jenkins, “[o]ne estimate suggests that some twenty-five thousand readers subscribed to alt.tv.twin-peaks, though the vast majority remained ‘lurkers’ who did not actively contribute to the discussion.”⁶⁸⁴ Jenkins notes that the group was characterized by specific interpretive concerns and strategies, including “their fixation on resolving narrative enigmas, their development of multiple alternative restagings of the core plotline, their complex relationship to Lynch as author, their appeal to extratextual discourse and intertextual linkages [...] as well as their perceptions of themselves as sophisticated television viewers and of the series as standing outside the mainstream of American television.”⁶⁸⁵

The newsgroup allowed the community to try out their interpretations and verify what they thought they had seen on *Twin Peaks*. “The computer net [...] allow[ed] fans to compare notes, elaborate and refine theories through collaboration with other contributors. All of the participants saw this group as involved in a communal enterprise. Entries often began with ‘Did anyone else see...’ or ‘Am I the only one who thought...,’ suggesting a felt need to confirm one’s own produced meanings through conversation with a larger community of readers...”⁶⁸⁶ The *Twin Peaks* cult functioned as a Kantian reception community built upon the demand to respond to works of art and to achieve agreement in judgments of taste. In this case, the online platform allowed individuals to articulate their judgments of taste and try out their interpretations on other group members who were equally invested in the work and in interpreting it well. These members could provide the most effective feedback because of their attentive reception.

⁶⁸⁴ Jenkins, p. 53.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

An additional reason for utilizing the online discussion boards was to show to other community members that your interpretation was the strongest. In this way, individuals “stak[ed] out a claim for their own superior knowledge of the shared narrative.”⁶⁸⁷

Nothing was off limits in these interpretations. An episode, a scene, or even the previews of next week’s episode were all ripe for analysis.⁶⁸⁸ Jenkins recounts the popularity of VCR recording of the program as follows: “According to one news story posted on the net, *Twin Peaks* had become the most video-taped program on network television during the time of its airing, with about 830,000 recording it each week. Most netters claimed that they watched the episodes multiple times during the week between their initial airing and the appearance of a new episode.”⁶⁸⁹ This sort of viewing fed the commitment to expert knowledge. Viewers who were master members of the online community sought to outdo others and competed to post their innovative interpretations as soon as possible. This one-upsmanship amongst a small group is indicative of the cult character of the *Twin Peaks* online community.

After the mystery of “Who Killed Laura Palmer?” was solved on the show – or more accurately, was forced to be resolved due to network pressure⁶⁹⁰ – the widespread popularity enjoyed by *Twin Peaks* fell precipitously. From Lynch’s point of view, the mystery could have been sustained for several more episodes, if not several more seasons, but ABC had other ideas in mind. The central mystery having been solved, the series floundered in search of direction. As a result of declining viewership, the show was

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

⁶⁸⁸ According to Jenkins, “The program’s coming attractions, with their split second shots and mismatched sounds, mandated the use of the VCR as an analytic tool, required that the image be frozen, frame-advanced, and watched several times. The coming attractions became yet another puzzle that could be eagerly controlled by Lynch’s ever-dwindling number of hardcore fans.” See Jenkins, p. 55.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 67, footnote #5.

⁶⁹⁰ Rodley, p. 180.

moved from Thursday to Saturday night, which is a virtual kiss of death for television programs.⁶⁹¹ It was at this shaky moment in the show's history that the true cult of Lynch emerged. Those who remained loyal to *Twin Peaks* in spite of its decline in ratings and critical acclaim were the most cultish viewers. Instead of treating inconsistencies in the show as a matter for criticism, cult members found ways to turn them into productive mysteries worth exploring together.

In aesthetic cults, debate about the work or artist in question is permissible, but maintenance of the group requires loyalty to a specific aesthetic vision. In this sense, the artists and their works of art remain sacred to the cult. However, if too many changes occur, and it appears as if the project has been betrayed at some level, a rift may open in the cult. For instance, when certain characters are given plot lines that seem to conflict with their central narratives – Cooper's getting too comfortable in Twin Peaks and trading in his formal FBI attire for flannel shirts – the group begins to question the direction of the work and whether it is maintaining its significance for the cult. If or when the artist betrays the vision that the cult has for the work and its place in their community, then some criticism of the artist is permitted. However, we should note that a cult can withstand only so much criticism before it collapses. In other words, at a certain point, the perception of the disarray of *Twin Peaks* extended from mainstream audiences into the cult itself. *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, the cinematic "prequel" to the series that was released in 1992 could not save the cult; instead, it further betrayed

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., p. 183. After the lobby to return the show to its original timeslot was successful, promos were made poking fun at the situation. Agent Cooper wakes up from a nightmare surrounded by several people from Twin Peaks gathered around his bedside. He describes his dream as taking place in a region called "Saturday night." Everyone reacts with horror.

cult members' expectations.⁶⁹² Critics and cult members alike were dissatisfied with the film, and the cult blended back into mainstream culture.⁶⁹³

C. Lynch's Cult and Aura

Contemporary aesthetic cults are involved in the collective enterprise of coming to understand their favored works or artists more deeply. This involves communication and the exchange of judgments of taste with one another – the trading of interpretations and analyses. Cults are not interested in the financial success of what they worship. As Wallace comments: “You almost never in a Lynch movie get the sense that the point is to ‘entertain’ you, and never that the point is to get you to fork over money to see it. This is one of the unsettling things about a Lynch movie: you don’t feel like you’re entering into any of the standard unspoken/unconscious contracts you normally enter into with other kinds of movies.”⁶⁹⁴ While television shows and films have some connection to Benjamin’s notion of exhibition value, the reproduction process makes a wider reaching cult possible. Physical proximity of location is no longer central to the notion of the cult, due precisely to the reproductive technologies that Benjamin criticizes. Persons who are

⁶⁹² According to David Lavery in the introduction to *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*: “When it was released in August of 1992, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* met with a derisive critical response from critics who often took pride in their near-complete ignorance of the television series (the film had already been booed at the Cannes Film Festival the previous spring), and in large part it was ignored, at least in the United States. Devoid of the series’ wacky humor, short on cherry pie and joe, missing (left on the cutting room floor) many of its favorite minor characters, unrelentingly dark and sinister and obscure, *Fire Walk with Me* announced in its very first image a rejection of television. The film’s credits are shown against a backdrop of blue static which we gradually realize to be the screen of an unreceptive television set.” See Lavery, p. 10. Instead of satisfying viewers’ curiosity about the fate of Cooper’s soul after having been inhabited by the evil spirit, BOB, Lynch went in another direction entirely. He decided to give viewers more of the backstory of Laura Palmer, by following her during the final days of her life and allowing her to tell her own story. This is a shift away from *Twin Peaks*, where Laura’s story was told by practically everyone *but* her. The film is a decidedly dark vision that is nearly bereft of the quirky fun, characters, and quotable lines of the series. By all accounts neither critics nor cult members were satisfied with the film.

⁶⁹³ Lavery, p. 11.

⁶⁹⁴ Wallace, p. 170-171.

interested in interpreting works of art together – particularly difficult to understand works of art – are generally not interested in the financial underpinnings of the marketing and distribution of them. But their ability to interpret these works nonetheless depends upon their accessibility, on television and online. Thus, not only does their ability to interpret these works depend upon exhibition value. The cult is actually preserved and promoted by it.

Aesthetic cults thrive upon the sacred and mysterious aspects of the work.

That is, they are invested in auracity. According to Lavery:

Again and again, through cult-building images, details, bits of dialogue, *Twin Peaks* solicited our engagement with the ‘wacko banality’ of its text. Solicits – would it be too much to say? – our love: according to Eco, another cult prerequisite. The cult viewer watching these moments – indeed watching *for* these moments – may, and I speak from experience here, let out an audible ‘I love this.’ These would be the moments sought in fast-forward and rewind (the show was reportedly the most videotaped on all of television); these would be recalled the next day.⁶⁹⁵

Lavery goes on to recall several of his favorite moments from the show, a laundry list of quirky elements that helped comprise the spirit of *Twin Peaks*. He comments that if every fan composed a list of the details and moments that struck them, each list would be slightly different.⁶⁹⁶ To return to the above point about *Twin Peaks*’ online community that circulated multiple interpretations of the show, each individual vying for narrative control and mastery, indicates that Lynch’s cult is built around an auratic work. The intricacy of the work made it seem as if there was always more to know about *Twin Peaks*. The cult viewers of the series were attracted to the show because of the “unique

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 11, emphasis in original.

⁶⁹⁶ Recall Eco’s comment above how cult objects “must be able to break, dislocate, [and] unhinge [...] so that one can remember only parts of it, irrespective of their original relationship with the whole.” See Eco, p. 198.

apparition of a distance, however near it may be.”⁶⁹⁷ No matter how many mysteries the cult unraveled, there were always more to try to solve.

Wallace comments upon this distance in relationship to Lynch’s films:

Depending upon whom you talk to, Lynch’s creepiness is either enhanced or diluted by the odd distance that seems to separate his movies from the audience. Lynch’s movies tend to be both extremely personal and extremely remote. The absence of linearity and narrative logic, the heavy multivalence of the symbolism, the glazed opacity of the characters’ faces, the weird ponderous quality of the dialogue, the regular deployment of grotesque figurants, the precise, painterly way scenes are staged and lit, and the overlush, possibly voyeuristic way that violence, deviance, and general hideousness are depicted – these all give Lynch’s movies a cool, detached quality, one that some cinéastes view as more like cold and clinical.⁶⁹⁸

While Wallace is referring to Lynch’s films here, these points can be extended to *Twin Peaks*. Because the show was full of secrets hidden in plain sight, in a town where the “owls are not what they seem,” the cult of Lynch attempted to unravel the mysteries and make sense of the multivalence of *Twin Peaks* in accord with one another. This sometimes meant that individual members puzzled over the show’s mysteries and even developed mysteries out of small details that may not indicate anything in particular about the trajectory of the series. The use of technology – from VCR to Internet newsgroups and fanpages – made it possible for the community to connect to one another more easily, especially when cult members were located far away from one another, by sharing their god regardless of their distance from one another.

The true cult members of *Twin Peaks* treated the series reverently even after its popularity had waned. This respect was shown most clearly in the continuation of the online discussion on alt.tv.twin-peaks. Although the mass audience and critics had

⁶⁹⁷ Walter Benjamin. “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.” Third Version. In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. IV, 1938-1940*. Trans. Suhrkamp Verlag. Ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006., p. 255.

⁶⁹⁸ Wallace, p. 166-167.

abandoned the work, the cult continued its worship by deciphering small details and hidden clues. The cult's criticism of *Twin Peaks* was by no means ginger, but no topic was taboo, either. While some might suggest that this means the cult object was secular, the care with which this criticism was conducted shows a reverence for the work and what it meant to the cult. The delicate balance between the desire to know and the desire to preserve the mysteries of *Twin Peaks* was kept alive by its cult.

Moreover, the members of this community valued Lynch's directorial and authorial role at the center of the cult. The first season of *Twin Peaks*, in particular, bears the mark of Lynch's influence and tone. Lynch directed the pilot, as well as episodes 1, 2, 8, 9, 14, and 29 and co-wrote several episodes with Mark Frost.⁶⁹⁹ Even though Lynch only directed a handful of episodes, they established the tone and dealt with crucial moments of development of character and plot. Lynch states, "I just picked the ones I couldn't bear not to do. I knew I wanted to do the one with Leland/Bob. And there were a couple of others. I wanted to do the very last one – [laughs] – and the very beginning one! And all the ones in between! [Laughs.]"⁷⁰⁰ Arguably, the other directors tried to emulate Lynch's style in order to bring coherence to the series. During Lynch's absence in season two while he was working on *Wild at Heart*, the cult hung on for a time. But when *Twin Peaks* diverged from Lynch's vision too much, the cult no longer perceived its center; the cult disintegrated.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁹ Rodley, p. 255.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p.175.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., p.182 and p. 192.

VII. Coda

Having performed the above analysis of aesthetic communities based upon shared interest in a work of art or particular artist, what have the arguments regarding the effects of wing clipping on expression amounted to? While Kant claims that wing clipping is necessary to make the ideas in works of genius durable, lasting, and fit for an ever-advancing culture, he did not fully consider the effects of this process – both positive and negative. In the foregoing Kantian argument, I have shown that restrictions on expression are actually restrictions on individual subjects. Because the individual feels her *self* in response to art, the communication of judgments of taste is extremely intimate in nature. So when some expressions are under pressure of wing clipping – understood here as silencing – so are the identities and ways of living of those individuals who feel attracted to those works and artists. Combining this thought with Wittgenstein’s notion that language is a form of life, restrictions upon expressions are also restrictions on ways of living and being. For this reason, it is important to recognize the role of community building as a form of response to restrictions on expression. Because of the connection of wing clipping and silencing, alternative communities can form in order to preserve particular expressions and identities apart from culture.

Throughout the dissertation, I examined three different levels wing clipping – no wing clipping, minimal wing clipping, and extreme wing clipping – to understand the results of each more fully. While at first blush, a lack of wing clipping might seem to promote free expression, it turns out that uninhibited expressions are incomprehensible to culture. Because culture and community are based upon shared norms of communication, works that do not share this basis for comprehensibility are silenced. I explored the

avant-garde theater of Needcompany, and in particular, *Needcompany's King Lear* to show how pushing the bounds of comprehensible communication through the use of multiple languages and scrolling Shakespearean supertitles silenced the work. Audiences at the Brooklyn Academy of Music left the production before it was over because of its lack of restraint, and thus, its lack of taste.

Minimal wing clipping showed the way in which innovative expressions can be stifled or marginalized for a time. The exclusion of Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* and *Fountain* forced the artist to reconsider his relationship to the artworld and whether he had a place in it. The resistance to his work pushed Duchamp to continue to express himself as he saw fit, but to avoid traditional exhibition practices. So while his future works were not fully silenced or excluded as in prior cases, his works were received at the margins rather than at the center of the artworld. After his early rejections, Duchamp rarely accepted invitations to exhibit in galleries and instead displayed his works in liminal spaces like his own studio and in the entryways to exhibitions. In the case of readymades, this meant that Duchamp's work was not even recognized as art in many cases.

Rather than merely pushing works aside or delaying their reception, extreme wing clipping shows us cases of silencing in its most ordinary sense. I examined the reception and removal of *Tilted Arc* from New York's Federal Plaza. In this case, Richard Serra's work had been commissioned for the site, but due to objections from workers in the building as well as bureaucrats, a movement to remove the work began. A long court case and appeals process ensued. Serra lost, and *Tilted Arc* was removed from the plaza – or if you consider the work to have been site specific, it was destroyed. The

work's removal ended the debate about it among workers, bureaucrats, and the general public. But this proved to be an incomplete silencing because aestheticians and art historians continued to discuss *Tilted Arc*, its status as public or site specific, and the significance of the case and the debate surrounding the work.

The notion of Kantian wing clipping has always concerned me because when expressions are endangered, so are the individuals who value them. As we saw in this chapter, cults and subcultures can ensure that expressions are not fully silenced by wing clipping in spite of the pressures put upon them by culture or taste. Such groups can preserve these expressions in a community of like-minded individuals in order to discuss and defend them privately amongst themselves as an isolationist group, or more publicly with openness to communication with culture. In other words, we see that endangered expression can find a place outside of the confines of culture in communities that form based upon shared interests, particularly aesthetic ones.

Throughout this argument, I have highlighted the positive attributes of cults and subcultures in order to recuperate the negative connotations these groups have in popular culture. *From the perspective of culture*, cults and subcultures are fringe elements at best and subversive elements at worst. They often appear not to make meaning and thus, are treated with disdain or as unworthy of consideration. Insofar as subcultures are open to the possibility of communication with culture, these communities are often treated with a modicum more respect. Cults, however, are often shrouded with mystery, ritual, and the sort of "insiderness" that makes mainstream comprehension of these groups and their expressions quite difficult.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s draft additions from 2001 and 2004, a cult is a "relatively small group of people having religious beliefs or practices regarded by others as strange or sinister."⁷⁰² Because cults are often associated with deviant behavior or illegal activity such as brainwashing, coercion, kidnapping, abuse, murder, and suicide, I hoped to focus upon the aesthetic dimensions of cults in order to break the association with notorious cults such as Heaven's Gate, the Manson Family, or the People's Temple in Jonestown. In such groups, devotion to a questionable cause was pursued in a way that betrayed the madness of the particular cult and its goals. It is this popular and pejorative sense of cult that I aimed to avoid in my argument. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* points out, cult can also refer to "cultural phenomena with a strong, often enduring appeal to a relatively small audience; (also) designating this appeal or audience, or any resultant success; fringe, non-mainstream. Hence: possessing a fashionable or exclusive cachet; *spec.* (of artistic figures or works) having a reputation or influence disproportionate to their limited public exposure or commercial success. Freq. in *cult figure, cult status.*"⁷⁰³ This sense of cult is much closer to the Benjaminian sense I traced out in Chapter Four and helps to highlight the shared interests of cult communities. As we have seen throughout the dissertation, the stakes of silence and silencing are crucial to the identities of community members and the expressions they value as a group. While silence can be a productive moment of response that takes place as an individual considers the work and tries to cognize it, we must be aware of the dangers that cultural silencing pose to expressions, individuals, and groups when they are considered to be

⁷⁰²<http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/Entry/45709?rskey=1hExtg&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

⁷⁰³<http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/Entry/45709?rskey=1hExtg&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

subversive or unwelcome to the culture in question. We must guard against such illegitimate restrictions in order to preserve diversity in identity and expression and to expand their bounds in the future.

Conclusion

The notion of Kantian wing clipping has always concerned me because exclusions on expressions are (or indicate) exclusions of persons. Not only does wing clipping limit the type of art that individuals can produce, but it also restricts the type of art to which individuals may respond. In other words, wing clipping affects a double silencing of individuals who are the producers of art (especially those endowed with genius) and the responders to art (everyone in society who attempts to cultivate their taste). As we have seen here, restrictions upon genius limit the horizons of culture for all persons.

The ability to express ourselves is vital to our sense of belonging to a particular society or culture. If our expressions are deemed unacceptable, they mark us as marginal persons who are on the fringes or are excluded from a society or culture. History shows us many examples of restrictions on communities that involve limitations on expression and identity. Even as we make progress towards inclusivity, we must still be vigilant about restrictions because of their implications for both individual and group identities. To clarify, although this dissertation has focused primarily upon aesthetic expression and the restrictions of such, it has also argued for the social and political implications of these restrictions on expression.

One of the strongest implications of the above analysis is that wholly unrestricted works of genius do not contribute to culture. All works of art pose demands to the audience that tries to comprehend them because of the complexity of the aesthetic ideas they present. Works of genius exacerbate these demands due to their innovative exemplarity for which there is not yet a rule by which to make sense of them. The new rules that these works set for art are only derivable retrospectively. If the works are

especially innovative, they may be difficult to understand in a way that makes thinking about them and talking about them a frustrating and potentially difficult undertaking. The desire to think the works through in order to figure them out wanes if they seem to exclude their audiences from the outset. In other words, unrestrained genius does not produce works that are beneficial to culture and communication. A lack of wing clipping does little to promote greater innovation and creativity; instead, innovative and nonsensical works challenge the audience in a merely negative way. Their reception shows the importance of at least a degree of comprehensibility for audiences lest they become frustrated to such an extent that they refuse to consider these artworks at all.

So too, extreme wing clipping in the sense of the censorship is also dangerous for artists and audiences alike. While comprehensibility is always worth pursuing, if taken too far, it strangles the expression and renders it unable to speak. From the above analysis, we have seen that a moderation of wing clipping most contributes to human flourishing and community formation and maintenance. Let us turn in closing to an example of how this works in artistic practice. The filmmaking career of Pedro Almodóvar will give clarity to this point, and in particular, to the modulation of his work from his exuberant and often subversive early films to his more contemplative recent contributions. Again, while it may seem as if restrictions on art will destroy the work or damage its expressive power, I aim to briefly show that restrictions may actually promote communication and serve to refine the themes, content, and significance of what is being conveyed by the artist. To do so, I will contrast Almodóvar's early films with his later *Broken Embraces* in order to show that when he restrains himself and adopts a more reflective tone, his work shines forth all the more powerfully for it.

Almodóvar's early films focus upon the transgression of norms and the exploration of taboos for the explicit purpose of scandalizing and titillating audiences. In addition to the "telenovela" plotlines and tone, the depiction of violence, gender, and overt sexuality was meant to shock and, in some cases, delight audiences. According to Marsha Kinder, *The Law of Desire (La Ley del Deseo)* (1987) is an "outrageous melodrama featuring homosexual and transsexual protagonists in a sado-masochistic triangle involving incest, murder, and suicide and involving several sexually explicit homoerotic love scenes."⁷⁰⁴ Almodóvar's later films, by contrast, show restraint and the reflectiveness of a mature artist. Case in point is *Broken Embraces (Los Abrazos Rotos)* (2009), which both breaks new ground and is itself a reflective (and reflexive) play on many of Almodóvar's earlier works especially *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*.

Broken Embraces begins in 2008 with a blind writer named Harry Caine (Lluís Homar), who relates a dramatic story of his own past as a prominent director named Mateo Blanco through a series of detailed flashbacks. In 1994, he was making a film called *Girls and Suitcases (Chicas y Maletas)* which features many recognizable, albeit rearranged, elements of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. Mateo finds inspiration when Lena (Penélope Cruz) auditions for a part in his production. This raises the ire of Ernesto Martel (José Luis Gómez), Lena's controlling longtime lover, because he doesn't want to share her with anyone, not even with her work. Thus, Martel decides to produce the film as a way to stay involved and to keep an eye on Lena. As the filming progresses, Mateo and Lena become romantically entangled, which sends Martel into a

⁷⁰⁴ Marsha Kinder. "Pleasure and the New Spanish Mentality: A Conversation with Pedro Almodóvar." *Film Quarterly* 41 (1) (Autumn 1987): 33-44, p. 33.

possessive rage. When Martel's jealousy turns violent, Lena and Mateo resolve to run away together. In their absence, Martel releases an unauthorized version of *Girls and Suitcases* composed of the worst takes in order to humiliate Lena and Mateo. In exacting his revenge, Martel also hopes to lure the couple back to Madrid in order to make them pay for their affair. During their drive back, the couple is in a terrible crash that kills Lena and blinds Mateo. This ends Mateo's filmmaking career and breaks his heart. Through telling this story to his assistant and her son, Harry finds out that all of the takes of *Girls and Suitcases* have been preserved along with the soundtrack. At the end of the film, Harry reclaims his identity as Mateo and begins re-editing the film according to his original plans.

Formally, *Broken Embraces* is structured through a series of flashbacks between 2008 and 1992-1994 and between the now blind Harry Caine and the sighted Mateo Blanco. Just as Harry tells the story of the making of *Girls and Suitcases* and of how he lost his sight, Almodóvar reflects upon his own filmmaking career by making several references to his works' themes and characters. According to Marsha Kinder,

In *Broken Embraces*, the most explicit Almodóvar inter-text is *Women on the Verge*, his first crossover success in the global market and the film being remixed in Mateo's *Girls and Suitcases*. Pina's laments about Ivan, her gazpacho spiked with sleeping pills, burned bed, discarded phone, and suitcase full of cocaine—these elements make the connection to *Women on the Verge* impossible to miss, but (like those from the Oedipal myth) they are reshuffled.⁷⁰⁵

In *Broken Embraces*, we have not only a film-within-a film structure, but also the parallel reflection and reflexivity of Mateo and Almodóvar himself. Because of the intermixture of several of his films within *Broken Embraces*, we might say that vision and revision are crucial to Almodóvar's reflection upon his own career and process of art making.

⁷⁰⁵ Marsha Kinder. "Restoring *Broken Embraces*." *Film Quarterly* 63 (3) (Spring 2010): 28-34, p. 34.

Because of his distance from his earlier films, Almodóvar is able to recombine them in new ways in order to re-see and remix the themes and images predominant in his works.

Fragmentation and intertextuality form a complex foundation for the film noir intrigues and the layering of multiple secrets in the plot. According to Kinder:

At one point we see thousands of fragments from torn photographs of Mateo and Lena embracing, forming a giant collage that fills the entire screen. Almodóvar calls it the film's 'most expressive image,' one that evokes not only the title *Broken Embraces* but also the film's underlying database structure. Diego selects a few fragments and begins reassembling them like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. This is the same process he and Mateo later follow in restoring the original version of *Girls and Suitcases*. It's also the process that each new film by Almodóvar demands of us spectators: rereading his entire body of work through each new remix, a process I call 'retro-seriality.'⁷⁰⁶

The complexity of the form of the film shows Almodóvar's development as a filmmaker as well as his careful reflection upon his art. In *Broken Embraces*, we get these reflections in the form of fragments, some thematic and some in the form of direct reference as in the repetition of pieces of dialogue from *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. "Intertextuality and remix are nothing new in Almodóvar movies, but no film uses them more powerfully [than *Broken Embraces*], for here they are pivotal to the plot."⁷⁰⁷ In *Broken Embraces*, Almodóvar avoids the trademarks of his earlier career (shock tactics and the exploration of taboos) and instead utilizes fragmentation, montage, and remix as the formal foundation for the film's action. Rather than destroying meaning by fragmenting and combining elements from his earlier films, Almodóvar has refined his expression through carefully reflecting on his works. I argue that the restraint shown by Almodóvar in *Broken Embraces* can be considered a form of moderate wing clipping. Some might argue that the referencing and remixing Almodóvar

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 30.

executes in *Broken Embraces* mutilates his earlier films. However, I argue that Almodóvar has found a way to see his works anew which opens up his vision of cinema going forward. Arguably, with *Broken Embraces* Almodóvar has achieved what Kierkegaard terms “repetition with a difference.”⁷⁰⁸

The consideration of the passage of time in *Broken Embraces* shows Almodóvar’s concern for the process of art making and the kind of vision and insight that it requires. Kinder states, “*Broken Embraces* asks whether a filmmaker can survive a loss of vision – the same question raised in *81/2* where the loss was figurative – an aging auteur not knowing what to do next. Here the loss is literal.”⁷⁰⁹ In many ways, *Broken Embraces* is a love letter to filmmaking and to the liberating and transformative power of art.

According to Almodóvar:

I believe [*Broken Embraces*] is the most complex script I've ever written and during the writing of this film and also during the shoot, I did find myself in a different place. The way of making the film, the way of telling the story, the actors' tone and the way of editing was, you could say, a departure from some of my previous films. The film is much more balanced between the female characters and the male characters. This is also something new for me. I do feel that this film is a true declaration of love for cinema. I could almost say that cinema perfects all the irregularities, or the imperfections, of life.⁷¹⁰

Because Almodóvar is reflecting upon his own process of art making and love of cinema, much of the film depicts filmmaking in progress, whether it is Mateo’s *Girls and Suitcases* production at the beginning and end of the film, his writing of scripts as Harry Caine after he has lost his sight, the documentary-spy film of Ernesto Jr., or Lena’s acting

⁷⁰⁸ See Søren Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*. Trans. Hong and Hong. Princeton University Press, 1983.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 28.

⁷¹⁰ <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000264/bio>

through multiple takes in which she tries to apply Mateo's direction.

While most critics emphasize the relationship of men and art in the film, especially the parallels between Mateo and Almodóvar, little space is devoted to the relationship of women and art. While commentators focus upon the way in which *Broken Embraces* thematizes the process of filmmaking (art making), little is made of Lena's motivation to continue acting in *Girls and Suitcases* even though she is risking so much – her life – in order to do so. I argue that the transformative power of art making is seen most clearly, however, with Lena, who finds liberation through her role in *Girls With Suitcases*. Not only does she work hard and try to hone her craft as an actress, but she also finds freedom and her own voice as she breaks away from her possessive lover, Ernesto. Although Ernesto finances the production, he cannot fathom what draws Lena to this role or what she could possibly gain from exploring her talents. Simply put, he does not take her seriously as a woman who has something to offer to the world. In fact, Ernesto does not view Lena's acting or the film she is starring in as art at all. Interestingly, this attitude is mirrored by critics who manage to overlook how Lena is transformed through her participation in the production. Because of the film, she is more vibrant and alive; Lena finds the strength to pursue her own goals and explore her own identity apart from Ernesto. Lena is liberated through art making because of how enlivening and extremely personal it is, just as responding to art is, as we have explored throughout the dissertation.

Many critics, instead of viewing *Broken Embraces* as Almodóvar's masterwork that is in conversation with his oeuvre, treat its reflexivity and restraint in a negative light. According to Kinder:

Many reactions to Pedro Almodóvar's latest film, *Broken Embraces*, have been less than enthusiastic. Some critics claim it repeats what he has already done while others feel it lacks the comic exuberance of early films like *Labyrinth of Passions*, the subversive sexuality of transformational works like *Matador* and *Law of Desire*, and the emotional fire of mature masterpieces like *All About My Mother* and *Talk to Her*. While some of these complaints are justified, they don't acknowledge what this new film contributes: a masterful celebration of cinema's powers of resilience, at an historic moment when the medium has gone digital and its methods of distribution are being redefined.⁷¹¹

Rather than viewing his directorial repetitions as carefully considered choices through which Almodóvar reflects on his career, critics view them as signs that *Broken Embraces* is merely derivative and therefore less powerful than the works he quotes. In fact, Almodóvar goes beyond mere quotation to "repetition with a difference." As Kinder claims, the director remixes his films and utilizes them as intertexts within *Broken Embraces*. In this way, he reconsiders his prior efforts in order to make something new.

By carefully reflecting on his prior films, Almodóvar is able to compose a subtler, more expressive work with *Broken Embraces*. Again, while freedom of expression must be preserved, restraint enhances the expression that is put forth. Moderate wing clipping is beneficial to the expression of ideas and the communities who value them. Instead of understanding this restriction in a merely negative fashion, we can see that it also promotes communication and community building.

⁷¹¹ Kinder, p. 28.

Bibliography

- Allison, Henry. *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Alpers, Svetlana. *Rembrandt's Enterprise: The Studio and the Market*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Almodóvar, Pedro. *All About My Mother*. DVD. Spain: El Deseo S.A., Renn Productions, France 2 Cinéma, 1999.
- Almodóvar, Pedro. *Broken Embraces*. DVD. Spain: Universal Pictures International, Canal+ España, and El Deseo S.A., 2009.
- Almodóvar, Pedro. *The Law of Desire*. DVD. Spain: El Deseo S.A., Laurenfilm, 1987.
- Almodóvar, Pedro. *Talk to Her*. DVD. Spain: El Deseo S.A., Antena 3 Televisión, Good Machine, Vía Digital, 2002.
- Almodóvar, Pedro. *Volver*. DVD. Spain: Canal+ España, El Deseo S.A., Ministerio de Cultura, 2006.
- Almodóvar, Pedro. *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. DVD. Spain, El Deseo S.A., Laurenfilm, 1988.
- Angell, Callie. *Andy Warhol's Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*. New York: Abrams, in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 2006.
- Anonymous. "The Richard Mutt Case." *The Blind Man* 2 (May 1917): 4-5.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: La Frontera – The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. 2nd Edition. Trans. Terence Irwin. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1999.
- Armstrong, Tom, ed. *The Andy Warhol Museum*. New York: Art Publishers, Inc., 1994.
- Asen, Robert. "Seeking the 'Counter' in Counterpublics." *Communication Theory* 10 (4) (November 2000): 424-446.
- Austin, Joe. *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Ball, Hugo. *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*. Trans. Ann Raimés. Ed. John Elderfield. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996.
- Barthes, Roland. *Image / Music / Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.
- Battcock, Gregory. "Notes on *The Chelsea Girls*: A Film by Andy Warhol." (review). *Art Journal* 26 (4) (Summer 1967): 363-365.
- Bazin, André. *What Is Cinema?* Volume 1. Trans. Hugh Gray. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967.
- Benhabib, Seyla. *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility." Third Version. In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. IV, 1938-1940*. Trans. Suhrkamp Verlag. Ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne.

Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2009.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Fifth Edition. Trans. Harry Zohn. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Bennett, Benjamin. "Nietzsche's Idea of Myth: The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Eighteenth Century Aesthetics." *PMLA* 94 (3) (May 1979): 420-433.

Bergin, Paul. "Andy Warhol: The Artist as Machine." *Art Journal* 26 (4) (Summer 1967): 359-363.

Birns, Nicholas. "Telling Inside from Outside, or Who Really Killed Laura Palmer." *Literature / Film Quarterly* 21 (4) (Winter 1993): 277-286.

Birringer, Johannes. "Video Art / Performance: A Border Theory." *Performing Arts Journal* 13 (3) (Sept. 1991): 54-84.

Bokris, Victor. *Warhol: The Biography*. New York: Da Capo, 2003.

Bogoeva-Sedlar, Ljiljana. "Shakespeare and Modern Versions of His Plays: Variations and Departures." *Facta Universitatis: Linguistics and Literature* 1 (4) (1997): 207-233.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction*. Trans. Richard Nice. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with participation of Mathieu Copeland. Dijon, France: Les Presse Du Reel, 1998.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Film and Radio*. Trans. Marc Silberman. London, UK:

Methuen, 2000.

Bromwich, David. "Reflections on the Word Genius." *New Literary History* 17 (1) (Autumn 1985): 141-164.

Bruni, Frank. "Where to Take Thoreau and Dr. Atkins." *The New York Times*. 30 March 2005.

Buchloh, Benjamin H.D. "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966. In *Andy Warhol (October Files 2)*. Ed. Annette Michelson. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.

Buchloh, Benjamin, Rosalind Krauss, Alexander Alberro, Thierry de Duve, Martha Buskirk, and Yve-Alain Bois. "Conceptual Art and the Reception of Duchamp." *October* 70 "The Duchamp Effect" (Autumn 1994): 126-146.

Bürger, Peter. "The Significance for the Avant-Garde for Contemporary Aesthetics: A Reply to Jürgen Habermas." *New German Critique*. 22 (Special Issue on Modernism) (Winter 1981): 19-22.

Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1974.

Buskirk, Martha and Mignon Nixon, eds. *The Duchamp Effect: Essays, Interviews, Roundtable*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.

Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Byrne, David. *Strange Ritual: Words and Pictures by David Byrne*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1995.

Cabanne, Pierre. *The Documents of 20th Century Art: Dialogues With Marcel Duchamp*. Trans. Ron Padgett. NY: The Viking Press, Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1971.

- Cannon, Joseph. "The Intentionality of Judgments of Taste in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (1) (Feb. 2008): 53-65.
- Carlson, Marvin. "Needcompany's *King Lear* and the Semiotics of Supertitles." In *No Beauty for Me There Where Human Life Is Rare: On Jan Lauwers' Theatre Work with Needcompany*. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press and International Theatre & Film Books, 2007.
- Carroll, Michael. "Agent Cooper's Errand in the Wilderness: *Twin Peaks* and American Mythology." *Literature / Film Quarterly* 21 (4) (Winter 1993): 287-295.
- Cavell, Stanley. *Must We Mean What We Say?* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Chalupecky, Jindřich. "Marcel Duchamp: A Re-Evaluation." Trans. Paul Wilson. *Artibus et Historiae* 6 (11) (1985): 125-136.
- Cohen, Ted and Paul Guyer, eds. *Essays in Kant's Aesthetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Collingwood, Robin George. *Essays in the Philosophy of Art*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964.
- Collingwood, Robin George. *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*. 2nd Edition. Bristol, UK: Thoemmes Press, 1997.
- Costello, Diarmuid. "Greenberg's Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65 (2): 217-228.
- Crary, Alice. "A Question of Silence: Feminist Theory and Women's Voices." *Philosophy* 76 (2001): 371-395.
- Crimp, Douglas. "Getting the Warhol We Deserve." *Social Text* 59 (Summer 1999): 49-66.

- Cros, Caroline. *Marcel Duchamp: Critical Lives*. Trans. Vivian Rehberg. London, UK: Reaktion Books, Ltd., 2006.
- Crow, Thomas. *Modern Art in the Common Culture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Crow, Thomas. *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996.
- Cunningham, David. "The Futures of Surrealism: Hegelianism, Romanticism, and the Avant-Garde." *SubStance* 34 (2) (2005): 47-65.
- Damisch, Hubert. "The Duchamp Defense." Trans. Rosalind Krauss. *October* 10 (Autumn 1979): 5-28.
- Danto, Arthur C. *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Danto, Arthur C. *Andy Warhol*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Danto, Arthur C. *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Danto, Arthur, C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Danto, Arthur C. *The Wake of Art*. Gregg Horowitz and Tom Huhn, eds. Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998.
- Dargis, Manohla. "Distorted, Distorting and All-Too Human: Critic's Notebook: *Eraserhead*." *The New York Times* 7 December 2007.
- Davenport, Randi. "The Knowing Spectator of *Twin Peaks*: Culture, Feminism, and Family Violence." *Literature / Film Quarterly* 21 (4) (Winter 1993): 255-259.

- Debord, Guy. *Internationale Situationniste* 1 (June 1958).
- De Duve, Thierry. "Andy Warhol, or The Machine Perfected." Trans. Rosalind Krauss. *October* 48 (Spring 1989): 3-14.
- De Duve, Thierry. *Clement Greenberg Between the Lines*. Trans. Brian Holmes. Paris: Éditions dis Voir, 1996.
- De Duve, Thierry. "Echoes of the Readymade: Critique of Pure Modernism." Trans. Rosalind Krauss. *October* 70 (Autumn 1994): 60-97.
- De Duve, Thierry. *Kant After Duchamp*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.
- Demos, T.J. *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.
- Dienstag, Joshua Foa. "Nietzsche's Dionysian Pessimism." *The American Political Science Review* 95 (4) (December 2001): 923-937.
- Diserens, Corinne, ed. *Gordon Matta-Clark*. New York: Phaidon Press Inc., 2006.
- Dolnick, Sam. "Richard Serra Sculpture Rusts in Bronx Yard." *The New York Times*. 24 September 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/26/nyregion/26serra.html>
- Dunning, Jennifer. "Life-and-Death Matters: Messy Yet Laughable." (theater review). *The New York Times*. 29 October 1999.
- Dyer, Jennifer. "The Metaphysics of the Mundane: Understanding Andy Warhol's Serial Imagery." *Artibus et Historiae* 25 (49) (2004): 33-47.
- Earnest, Steve. "Justus Leibig Universität Giessen: A New Direction in German Theatre Training." *New Theatre Quarterly* 19 (3) (August 2003): 278-285.
- Eco, Umberto. "Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage." In *Travels in Hyper Reality*. Trans. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,

Publishers, 1983.

Eisenstein, Sergei. *Film Form*. Trans. Jay Leyda. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1949.

Eisenstein, Sergei. *Film Form + Film Sense*. 9th Edition. Ed. and Trans. Jay Leyda. New York: Meridian Books World Publishing Co., 1968.

Eley, Geoff. "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century." In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Ed. Craig Calhoun. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1992.

Felski, Rita. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Finkelpearl, Tom. *Dialogues in Public Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

Foster, Hal, ed. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. New York: The New Press, 1998.

Foster, Hal. "Death in America." *October* 75 (Winter 1996): 36-59.

Francina, Francis, ed. *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Frank, Thomas and Matt Weiland, eds. *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from The Baffler*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1997.

Fraser, Nancy. *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80.

Fraser, Nancy. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary*

- Social Theory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Gale, Matthew. *Dada & Surrealism*. London, UK: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1997.
- Gambino, Giacomo. "Nietzsche and the Greeks: Identity, Politics, and Tragedy." *Polity* 28 (4) (Summer 1996): 415-444.
- Gener, Randy. "The Art Guy: BAM's Guru Presides Over Wave After Wave of Genre-Defying Theatre." *American Theatre* (October 2004): 40-42; 156; 158-159.
- Gilbertson, Leanne. "Andy Warhol's *Beauty #2*: Demystifying and Reabstracting the Feminine Mystique, Obliquely." *Art Journal* 62 (1) (Spring 2003): 25-33.
- Godard, Jean-Luc. *Contempt*. DVD. France: Les Films Concordia, Rome Paris Films, Compagnia Cinematografica Champion, 1963.
- Godard, Jean-Luc. *Pierrot le Fou*. DVD. France: Films Georges de Beauregard, Rome Paris Films, Dino de Laurentiis Cinematografica, 1965.
- Goetschel, Willi. "Kant and the Christo Effect: Grounding Aesthetics." *New German Critique* 79 (Winter 2000): 137-156.
- Goldberg, Roselee. "Jan Lauwers and Needcompany." (theater review). *Artforum International* 38 (6) (February 2000): 122.
- Greenberg, Clement. "Avant-Garde and Kitsch." *Partisan Review* Fall 1939.
 Republished in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*.
 Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers,
 1993.
- Greenberg, Clement. *Collected Essays and Criticism, vol. I, Perceptions and Judgments: 1939-1944*. Ed. John O'Brian. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955.
- Greenberg, Clement. *Homemade Esthetics: Observations on Art and Taste*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Greenberg, Clement. "Modernist Painting." *Arts Yearbook* 1 1960. Republished in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993.

Greenberg, Clement. "Towards a Newer Laocoon." *Partisan Review* July-August 1940.

Groys, Boris. *Art Power*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008.

Guyer, Paul. *The Claims of Taste*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Guyer, Paul. *Knowledge, Reason, and Taste: Kant's Response to Hume*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.

Hall, Stuart and Tony Jefferson, eds. *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subculture in Post-War Britain*. New York: Routledge, 1975.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Trans. T. M. Knox. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Hein, Hilde. "What Is Public Art?: Time, Place, and Meaning." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1) (Winter 1996): 1-7.

Hermann, Rolf-Dieter. "Art, Technology, and Nietzsche." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 32 (1) (Autumn 1973): 95-102.

Herwitz, Daniel. *The Star as Icon: Celebrity in the Age of Mass Consumption*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

Hildebrand, Wil. "The Dramatic Theater in the Netherlands." *Theatre Research International* 27 (2) (2002): 192-200.

- Horowitz, Gregg M. "Public Art / Public Space: The Spectacle of the *Titled Arc* Controversy." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1) (Winter 1996): 8-14.
- Housefield, James. "Marcel Duchamp's Art and the Geography of Modern Paris." *Geographical Review* 92 (4) (October 2002): 477-502.
- Huysen, Andreas. "The Search for Tradition: Avant-Garde and Postmodernism in the 1970s." *New German Critique*. 22 (Special Issue on Modernism) (Winter 1981): 23-40.
- Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- James, David E. "The Unsecret Life: A Warhol Advertisement." *October* 56 (Spring 1991): 21-41.
- Jans, Erwin. "A Broken Community: On Needcompany." In *No Beauty for Me There Where Human Life Is Rare: On Jan Lauwers' Work with Needcompany*. Trans. Gregory Ball. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press and International Theatre & Film Books, 2007.
- Jefferson, Margo. "A Loose Memoir of Song, Dance and Image." (theater review). *The New York Times*. 16 December 2004.
- Jefferson, Margo. "Words to the Wise Performance Artist: Get Help. Collaborate. Grow." *The New York Times*. 1 January 2005.
- Johnson, Jeff. *Pervert in the Pulpit: Morality in the Works of David Lynch*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004.
- Joseph, Branden W. "'My Mind Split Open': Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable." *Grey Room* 8 (Summer 2002): 80-107.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. J.H. Bernard. Amherst, NY: Prometheus

- Books, 2000.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary Gregor. In *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues*. 3rd Edition. Ed. Cahn and Markie. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der Urteilkraft*. Hamburg, Germany: Felix Meiner Publishing, 1924.
- Kant, Immanuel. "What Is Enlightenment?" from *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Lewis White Beck. Ed. Ernst Behler. New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1986.
- Kaprow, Allan. *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*. Ed., Jeff Kelley. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003.
- Kelly, Michael. "Public Art Controversy: The Serra and Lin Cases." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1) (Winter 1996): 15-22.
- Kemal, Salim. *Kant's Aesthetic Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd Edition. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Kemal, Salim and Ivan Gaskell, eds. *Politics and Aesthetics in the Arts*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Kennedy, Randy. "When Meals Played the Muse." *The New York Times*. 21 February 2007.
- Kermode, Mark. "The Recalcitrant Interviewee." *Cinema Journal* 47 (2) (Winter 2008): 135-141.

- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*. Trans. Hong and Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Kinder, Marsha. "Restoring *Broken Embraces*." *Film Quarterly* 63 (3) (Spring 2010): 28-34.
- Kinder, Marsha. "Pleasure and the New Spanish Mentality: A Conversation with Pedro Almodóvar." *Film Quarterly* 41 (1) (Autumn 1987): 33-44.
- Kirshner, Judith Russi. "The Idea of Community in the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark." In *Gordon Matta-Clark*. Ed., Corinne Diserens. New York: Phaidon Press Inc., 2006.
- Kisselgoff, Anna. "Revisiting an Ice Queen, Making Sure She Melts." (dance review). *The New York Times*. 23 November 2002.
- Knabb, Ken, ed. *Situationist International Anthology*. Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981.
- Kohn, Jerome. "Kant's Common World." *Raritan* 22 (3) (Winter 2003): 102-113.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*. Trans. Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Kraut, Robert. *Artworld Metaphysics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Kripke, Saul. *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Kuzniar, Alice A. "Ears Looking at You: E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'The Sandman' and David

- Lynch's *Blue Velvet*." *South Atlantic Review* 54 (2) (May 1989): 7-21.
- Lauwers, Jan. "Against Populism: Some Observations About Art, Politics and the Pointlessness of Being Defined Based on Nationalism." *American Theatre* May / June 2006.
- Lavery, David, ed. *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995.
- Lee, Pamela M. *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.
- Lee, Pamela M. "On the Holes of History: Gordon Matta-Clark's Work in Paris." *October* 85 (Summer 1998): 65-89.
- Leland, John. *Hip: The History*. New York: Harper Collins / Perennial, 2004.
- Lockwood, Alan. "Rare Beauty Here: Needcompany at Twenty." (review). *Theater* 38 (2) (2008): 98-103.
- Lucas, Tim. "Kiss Me Doubly: David Lynch's *Lost Highway*." *Video Watchdog* 43 (Jan / Feb 1998): 26-35.
- Lynch, David. *Blue Velvet*. DVD. USA: De Laurentiis Entertainment Group, 1986.
- Lynch, David. *Dune*. DVD. USA: De Laurentiis Company and Universal Pictures, 1984.
- Lynch, David. *Eraserhead*. DVD. USA: The American Film Institute and Libra Films, 1976.
- Lynch, David. *Inland Empire*. DVD. USA: Studio Canal, Fundacja Kultury, Camerimage Festival, Absurda, Asymmetrical Productions, and Inland Empire Productions, 2006.
- Lynch, David. *Lost Highway*. DVD. USA: October Films, CiBy 2000, Asymmetrical

- Productions, and Lost Highway Productions, LLC, 1997.
- Lynch, David. *Mulholland Drive*. DVD. USA: Asymmetrical Productions, Babbo Inc., Canal+, and The Picture Factory, 2001.
- Lynch, David. *The Short Films of David Lynch*. DVD. USA. 1967, [1min]; 1968, [4min]; 1970, [34 min]; 1974, [5min]; 1988, [22min]; 1995. [55sec].
- Lynch, David. *Twin Peaks*. DVD. USA: Lynch/Frost Productions in association with Propaganda Films, Spelling Entertainment, and the American Broadcast Company, 1990-1991. [29 episodes]
- Lynch, David. *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. DVD. USA: New Line Cinema, CiBy 2000, 1992.
- Liotard, Jean-François. *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*. Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Makarushka, Irena. "Subverting Eden: Ambiguity of Evil and the American Dream in *Blue Velvet*." *Religion and American Culture* 1 (Winter 1991): 31-46.
- Mann, Paul. *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Mansbridge, Jane. "Feminism and Democracy." *The American Prospect* 1 (Spring 1990): 126-139.
- Marcus, Greil. *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Marcus, Greil. *The Shape of Things to Come: Prophecy and the American Voice*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006.
- Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

- Maurer, Daniel. "When Did Bone Marrow Become a Menu Must?" (20 March 2009)
http://newyork.grubstreet.com/2009/03/when_did_bone_marrow_become_tr.html
- McCloskey, Mary A. *Kant's Aesthetic*. London, UK: MacMillan Press, 1987.
- McConnell, Sean. "How Kant Might Explain Ugliness." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 48 (2) (2008): 205-228.
- McDowell, John. *Mind and World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- McGowan, Todd. "Finding Ourselves on a *Lost Highway*: David Lynch's Lesson in Fantasy." *Cinema Journal* 39 (2) (Winter 2000): 51-73.
- McKenna, Kristine. *Book of Changes: A Collection of Interviews by Kristine McKenna*. Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics Books, 2001.
- McMahon, Cliff G. "The Janus Aesthetic of Duchamp." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 26 (2) (Summer 1992): 41-51.
- Medina, José. *Speaking from Elsewhere: A New Contextualist Perspective on Meaning, Identity, and Discursive Agency*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Michelson, Annette, ed. *Andy Warhol (October Files 2)*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.
- Michelson, Annette. "Where Is Your Rupture?: Mass Culture and the Gesamtkunstwerk." *October* 56 (Spring 1991): 42-63.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. "The Violence of Public Art: *Do the Right Thing*." *Critical Inquiry* 16 (Summer 1990): 880-899.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. "The Violence of Public Art: *Do the Right Thing*." *Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing*. Ed. Mark A. Reid. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

- Mitchell, W.J.T. *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Molderings, Herbert. *Duchamp and the Aesthetics of Chance: Art as Experiment*. Trans. John Brogden. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Molesworth, Helen. "Work Avoidance: The Everyday Life of Marcel Duchamp's Readymades." *Art Journal* 57 (4) (Winter 1998): 51-61.
- Moure, Gloria. *Marcel Duchamp: Works, Writings, and Interviews*. Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2009.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Some Thoughts on Theories of Fetishism in the Context of Contemporary Culture." *October* 65 (Summer 1993): 3-20.
- Murray, Bradley. "Kant on Genius and Art." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 47 (2) (2007): 199-214.
- Nickerson, Catherine. "Serial Detection and Serial Killers in *Twin Peaks*." *Literature / Film Quarterly* 21 (4) (Winter 1993): 271-276.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Homer's Contest." In *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. and Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1954.
- Nochimson, Martha. *Inland Empire*. (review). *Film Quarterly* 60 (4) (Summer 2007): 10-14.
- Nochimson, Martha. "Like a Ribbon of Dreams: New York Film Festival 2006 Report

- (Part One)." *Film-Philosophy* 10 (3): 50-61.
- Nochimson, Martha. *Mulholland Drive*. (review). *Film Quarterly* 56 (1) (Autumn 2002): 37-45.
- Nochimson, Martha. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild At Heart in Hollywood*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997.
- North, Michael. "The Public as Sculpture: From Heavenly City to Mass Ornament." *Critical Inquiry* 16 (Summer 1990): 9-28.
- Norton, Louise. "Buddha of the Bathroom." *Blind Man* 2 (May 1917): 5-6.
- O'Connor, Peg. "Moving to New Boroughs: Transforming the World by Inventing Language Games." In *Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein*. Ed. Naomi Scheman and Peg O'Connor. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002.
- Orr, John. "A Cinema of Parallel Worlds: Lynch & Kieślowski." *Film International* 7(1) (February 2009): 28-43.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Plant, Sadie. *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Plato. *Apology*. In *Five Dialogues*. 2nd Edition. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002.
- Plato. *Phaedo*. In *Five Dialogues*. 2nd Edition. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002.
- Plato. *Symposium*. Trans. Nehamas and Woodruff. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999.

- Pollard, Scott. "Cooper, Details, and the Patriotic Mission of *Twin Peaks*." *Literature / Film Quarterly* 21 (4) (Winter 1993): 296-304.
- Rifkin, Libbie. *Career Moves: Olson Creeley, Zukofsky, Berrigan, and the American Avant-Garde*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000.
- Rodley, Chris, ed. *Lynch on Lynch*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1997.
- Rombes, Nicholas. "Blue Velvet Underground: David Lynch's Post-Punk Poetics." In *The Cinema of David Lynch: American Dreams, Nightmare Visions*. Ed., Erica Sheen and Annette Davison. New York: Wallflower Press, 2004.
- Roth, Moira. *Difference/Indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp, and John Cage*. Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998.
- Rozett, Martha Tuck. "Needcompany's *King Lear*." (review). *Shakespeare Bulletin* 20 (3) (Summer 2002): 22-23.
- Rundle, Erika. "Images of Freedom: Jan Lauwers Interviewed by Erika Rundle." *Theater* 33 (1) (2003): 59-71.
- Sallis, John. *The Gathering of Reason*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1980.
- Senie, Harriet F. and Sally Webster, eds. *Critical Issues in Public Art*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.
- Serra, Richard. "Tilted Arc Destroyed." *Art in America* 77 (5) (May 1989): 34-47.
- Serra, Richard. *Writings Interviews*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Ed. George Ian Duthie and John Dover Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Sheen, Erica and Annette Davison, eds. *The Cinema of David Lynch: American Dreams, Nightmare Visions*. New York: Wallflower Press, 2004.

- Shewey, Don. "At Play in Formlessness With Nothing to Cling To." (theater review). *The New York Times*. 24 November 1999.
- Sieving, Christopher. "Eve, Not Edie: The Queering of Andy Warhol." (review). *Postmodern Culture* 8 (3) (May 1998).
- Smith, Jane Farrell. "'No Master, Outside or In': Wittgenstein's Critique of the Proprietary Subject." In *Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein*. Ed. Naomi Scheman and Peg O' Connor. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002.
- Smith, Patrick S. *Andy Warhol's Art and Films*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986.
- Smith, Terry. "Contemporary Art and Contemporaneity." *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Summer 2006): 681-707.
- Smyth, Ned. "Gordon Matta-Clark." <http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/features/smyth/smyth6-4-04.asp>. Accessed 24 February 2011.
- Solina, Franc. "Fifteen Seconds of Fame." *Leonardo* 37 (2) (2004): 105-110.
- Soni, Vivisvan. "Communal Narcosis and Sublime Withdrawal: The Problem of Community in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*." *Cultural Critique* 64 (2006): 1-39.
- Stimson, Blake. "Warhol's Red Beard." *The Art Bulletin* 83 (3) (Sept. 2001): 527-547.
- Stalpaert, Christel. "Beauty as a Weapon Against the Unbearable Cruelty of Being in *Needcompany's King Lear*." In *No Beauty for Me There Where Human Life Is Rare: On Jan Lauwers' Theatre Work with Needcompany*. Trans. Gregory Ball. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press and International Theatre & Film Books, 2007.
- Stalpaert, Christel, Frederik Le Roy, and Sigrid Bousset, eds. *No Beauty for Me There*

Where Human Life Is Rare: On Jan Lauwers' Theatre Work with Needcompany. Trans. Brigitte Auer, Gregory Ball, Emiliano Battista, Michael Lomax, Aušra Simanavičiūtė, and Jana Renee Wilcoxon. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press and International Theatre & Film Books, 2007.

Stoller, James. "Beyond Cinema: Notes on Some Films by Andy Warhol." *Film Quarterly* 20 (1) (Autumn 1966): 35-38.

Stout, Jeffrey. *The Flight from Authority: Religion, Morality, and the Quest for Autonomy.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.

Strom, Kirsten. "'Avant-Garde of What?': Surrealism Reconceived as Political Culture." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 62 (1) (Winter 2004): 37-49.

Sussman, Elisabeth, ed. *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure.* New York: Whitney Museum of American Art / Yale University Press, 2007.

Swenson, G. R. "What Is Pop Art?: Answers from 8 Painters, Part I." *Art News* 64 (November 1963): 25-27, 61-62.

Taubin, Amy. "The Big Rupture." *Film Comment* 43 (1) (Jan / Feb 2007): 54-59.

Tomkins, Calvin. *Duchamp: A Biography.* New York: Holt, 1996.

Travers, Peter. *Lost Highway.* (review). *Rolling Stone* 755 (March 6, 1997): 77-78.

Vandenabeele, Bart. "Aesthetic Solidarity 'After' Kant and Lyotard." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 42 (4) (Winter 2008): 17-30.

Vanfleteren, Katrien Vuylsteke. "'Art is Always Politics': A Lacanian Reading of Lauwers' Newsletters." In *No Beauty for Me There Where Human Life Is Rare: On Jan Lauwers' Theatre Work with Needcompany.* Trans. Gregory Ball. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press and International Theatre & Film Books, 2007.

Vidler, Anthony. *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture.*

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

Walker, Stephen. *Gordon Matta-Clark: Art, Architecture, and the Attack on Modernism*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009.

Wallace, David Foster. "David Lynch Keeps His Head." In *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1997.

Warhol, Andy. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: (From A to B and Back Again)*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1977.

Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books; Cambridge, MA: Distributed by MIT Press, 2002.

Watson, Steven. *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2003.

Weber, Bruce. "When Shakespeare Could Use a Warning Label." (theater review). *The New York Times*. 2 November 2001.

Welsh, Jim. "Peaking Out with *Video Watchdog*." *Literature / Film Quarterly* 21 (4) (Winter 1993): 304.

Wheeler, Britta. "The Institutionalization of an American Avant-Garde: Performance Art as Democratic Culture, 1970-2000." *Sociological Perspectives*. 46 (4) (Media, Popular Culture, and the Arts) (Winter 2003): 491-512.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Third Edition. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. D.F. Pears and B.F.

McGuinness. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Wolf, Reva. "Collaboration as Social Exchange: *Screen Tests / A Diary* by Gerard Malanga and Andy Warhol." *Art Journal* 52 (4) (Winter 1993): 59-66.

Wolfe, Thomas. *The Pump House Gang*. London, UK: Bantam Publishing, 1969.

Young, Julian. *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Zižek, Slavoj. *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway*. Seattle, WA: Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities / University of Washington, 2000.