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Propaedeutic for an Aesthetic Theory of Political Communication

Kevin L. Dowler

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ABSTRACT

Propaedeutic for an Aesthetic Theory
of Political Communication

Kevin L. Dowler

This thesis lays the groundwork upon which an aesthetic theory of political communication can be based. Starting from the question "what is 'aestheticized' politics?" this paper undertakes an analysis of recent postmodernist, poststructuralist and cultural studies texts in order to demonstrate the affinities of these theoretical positions with an aesthetics drawn from the rhetorical tradition prior to Kant. Once the elements of a "postmodern" aesthetics are recognized as having been already worked out in the rhetorical tradition prior to Kant (which is carried through into the contemporary work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hans Robert Jauss), it is then possible to strengthen recent positions by drawing on the historical concepts.

The key aspect in drawing on this tradition is the restoration of the link between the sphere of art and the quotidian, which is unhinged by modernist aesthetics. Once this is restored, it is then possible to thematize aesthetic experience as having effects on the lifeworld. The concept

of aesthetic identification is introduced as a possible overcoming of the aporias of discursive analysis brought about by the withering of ideology.

In terms of political communication, it is posited that the disappearance of meaning put forward by postmodernist theory, and the consequent disappearance of a scene of operation for ideology, induces a shift to the level of aesthetical strategies in order to obtain the consensus required for the right to appropriate legislative power. As political rhetorical strategies shift into forms of simulation through the use of mass media, it is essential to thematize the level of aesthetic experience and identification in order to properly critique its effects.

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And finally, to Jutta, who somehow makes all the problems magically disappear: How could it ever be repayed?

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Methodological Notes

The idea for this essay began with a question arising out of what appears to be the current fascination with aesthetics, with what Martin Jay (1986) has described as a situation in which "the dedifferentiation of the value spheres are . . . purchased at the cost of the tacit elevation of one of them, aesthetics, understood in an essentially irrationalist sense" (p. 14). It is evident that his target is the postmodernists, who counterpose aesthetics to the effects of instrumental rationality as a way out of the bind in which science has put us.

That we should look to art as a possible source of salvation is of course not the strict property of postmodernism. This sense of the value of art in the face of an instrumentalized lifeworld of means-ends rationality is a theme that begins with the romantics Schiller and Schelling and runs through Hegel and Marx, Heidegger and Dewey, Adorno and Marcuse, and so on, up to Habermas and Lyotard today. In the likes of Baudrillard, we understand

the lifeworld itself to be aestheticized, leading his followers to describe politics as "the postmodern society of the spectacle under the sign of the aesthetic" (Cook 1986, p. 159).

Somehow, this idea of an aestheticized politics make a kind of intuitive sense. Certainly, we are all familiar with such notions as a 'politics of style' which have gained common currency, understood as an effect that mass media have had on the practice of politics. However, to make the claim that "politics is aestheticized" begs the question as to what is meant by aesthetic. Thus the question that began to interest me was: how is the term aesthetic defined in order to make sense of this statement? How can we bring an understanding of aesthetics to bear in such a way that we can then describe politics in aesthetical terms?

In what follows, I hope to be able to begin to sketch out an answer to those questions, and to determine the value of thinking the political in terms of aesthetics. This can only be broached tentatively, since as anyone who has entered the domain of aesthetics can attest, picking one's way through it is a daunting task. Yet it is necessary to do so, in order that the aesthetic not remain an empty concept which is simply invoked to mask the ignorance of its user. Heeding Perry Anderson, who, in "Modernity and Revolution" (1988), warns against employing such terms since they are "completely lacking in positive content" (p. 332), I suggest that this claim represents a need for the

introduction of content into what appears to be an empty concept, in a way that might justify its already excessive use. If it is not going to go away (which I do not think it will), then it needs to be defined in a way that it can be employed usefully. In a modest way, I hope to accomplish that in this essay.

If we can answer provisionally the question of what the term aesthetic might represent, then we will subsequently be able to apply it as a descriptor for a certain kind of social practice or practices. It is hoped that at the end of this essay, one will be in the position to utilize aesthetics as a means through which to understand social activity. Hans Robert Jauss (1982) notes that "the implicit hermeneutics of the aesthetical role concept thus makes possible the presumably purely analytical-empirical theory of socially conditioned forms of action" (p. 136); thus an aesthetic theory can become the means to reduce "the contingent entanglements of individual acts to a surveyable system of conditioned expectations" (loc. cit.). In other words, it is legitimate to posit an aesthetic theory as a means by which to explain social praxis. Indeed, Jauss, who is referring to Berger and Luckmann (1966), suggests that that is precisely the case.

In this, I will be moving somewhat against the grain. For example, in the works of Arnold Hauser (1982) and Janet Wolff (1983), as well as in the more widely known work of Pierre

Bourdieu (1984), the tendency has been to describe aesthetics as a product of social processes, and thus these works utilize the tools of social theory to analyze the formation of aesthetic attitudes. Although I will be drawing on this work, and consider it essential, I propose to invert it and do the opposite, which is—to understand the social as a product of aesthetic processes, and thus use aesthetic theory to describe the social, although it will be in terms of an aesthetic that departs from its "pure" form. To a degree, this will be a process of restoration. Against what has come to be known as modernist aesthetics and aesthetic experience, I will look to perspectives reaching back to Aristotle, but also forward into some aspects of postmodernism(s). The comparison is instructive, and holds up the possible means by which to strengthen more recent positions, especially when they turn their gaze toward praxis.

In doing this, I hope to avoid the charge leveled at Gadamer, who stands accused of hypostatizing tradition. The test, I suppose, will be the extent to which the proposals meet the criterium of explanatory power in relation to their object, in this case, political communication.

In large part, the concern here is with the possibility of sketching out a strategy which might usefully employ certain concepts or descriptions already developed, and a mapping of the connections that may be drawn between them. Although this essay is anchored by an investigation into the

nature of political communication and the attempt to find a more complex means by which to analyze it, it requires substantial digressions into theoretical terrain warranted by the complexity of the material discussed. This proviso notwithstanding, the way a particular position has organized itself in regard to certain epistemological assumptions, internal relations of its arguments, broader concerns in relation to other positions, or in terms of the historical development of a particular discipline, etc., will be investigated only to a certain depth. This is a constraint not only imposed on this essay, but also by the magnitude of the various fields discussed herein. Thus, I must disabuse anyone of the notion that this will be authoritative in respect to any specific field of inquiry. On the contrary, a rather opportunistic strategy of appropriation is employed, in that I seek out the parallels between disciplines and historical concepts and combine disparate positions, at the price of a certain loss of depth in any particular one. This is not to say, however, that it is not therefore possible to offer a plausible argument operating at a necessary level of complexity as is warranted by its object.

Two Kinds of Aesthetics

In the essay I referred to above by David Cook (1986), politics becomes spectacle, and is thought in terms of the Kantian form of aesthetic judgement: politics becomes the

object of disinterested pleasure (perhaps reflection would be better), disconnected from practical reason or any sort of effect. As an object of aesthetic judgement, reflection on politics is limited to its formal (visual) properties as spectacle.

To an extent, I suspect that this is a revision prompted by reading Kant through the optic of Baudrillard, in terms of a notion of dead power which reduces politics to pure form. Kant, as the ultimate formalist, is reread as the postmodern theorist of the political, bar none.[1] The extent to which this is valid rests on a sort of reifying process, which takes Kant as the final word in aesthetics. The pure gaze of aesthetic modernism appears "to be a gift of nature" when it is "really a product of history" (Bourdieu 1987, p. 202). The notion of disinterest which appears in Kant lends itself well to a culture of voyeurism, the spectator culture described by postmodernism.

Two points bear looking into: first, the notion of dead power which acts as the premise for the formalist approach to the political; and second, whether Kant is the appropriate model for a postmodern aesthetics.

As to the first point, it strikes me that it assumes too much by way of positing a synchronicity of effects in all aspects of the lifeworld, which I do not think is the case. As I will argue below, it is useful to distinguish between what I will call institutional structure and

signifying practices, which are not necessarily historically synchronic. If structure is where power is embedded, then we can begin to think in terms of a relationship between the two as propping each other up; that is to say, signifying practice operates to secure power in the institutional setting. Without going further now, it will suffice to refer to some comments on Baudrillard by Lawrence Grossberg (1987):

> Baudrillard argues that, with the implosion of difference, the indifference of meaning, reality too has collapsed into its model. The subject, the social, the political--all have become simulacra, located in a logic of deterrence which has redefined the operation of power. . . . Baudrillard makes the real into nothing but an effect of meaning so that when meaning collapses, the real must as well. . . . The social may not be meaningfully invoked (it may have lost its 'existential' meaning), but that doesn't mean it is not still effectively constituted through other discursive effects. (p. 43-44)

This I take to mean, as Grossberg states, that it is a particular relation of public and private experience that has changed, but which does not automatically result in the disappearance of the real, and hence does not imply the disappearance of (political) power either. I will put forward later the idea that simulacra are indeed operative, but not in terms of the totality that Grossberg rightly criticizes. Other discourses and concepts still have effects on the subject, such that no one discourse (i.e. postmodernism) can be elevated at the expense of other still-active discourses in a non-synchronic scenario. Peter Burger has an instructive warning in regard to this matter:

> One should not assume, therefore, that all categories (and what they comprehend) pass through an even development. Such an evolutionist view would eradicate what is contradictory in historical processes and replace it with the idea that development is linear progress. . . . in contrast to this idea, the non-synchronism of the development of individual [social] subsystems must be insisted upon. (p. 19, 24)

As to the second point, in a gross overgeneralization one could describe aesthetics as being reducible to two kinds. One of those I could call Kantian, by which I would mean the disinterested contemplation of objects aesthetically, in terms of their formal properties. This is a mode described by Kant as "disinterested interest" in which the commerce of works of art is disconnected from their use-values: "the judgement of taste, which when pure combines satisfaction or dissatisfaction [in the object]--without any reference to its use or to a purpose . . ." (Kant 1951, p. 79). It is evident here in this brief glance that commerce with art is disconnected from other forms of interaction, following the Kantian division of culture (of pure philosophy) into the what have become the three autonomous "value spheres": nature, freedom, and art (or as Habermas refers to them: cognitive, moral-practical, and expressive, respectively [1983, p. 11]). In the postmodernist version (Cook 1986), Kant's aesthetics becomes the "founding text of aesthetic liberalism" (p. 160), wherein the citizen is transformed into the spectator, where politics becomes spectacle, an object of aesthetic judgement of the "passive individual willing-not-to-will" (p. 164).

The Kantian legacy, updated in this way, singles out the aesthetic-expressive sphere and elevates it to the central experience of the postmodern, what Jay called the "tacit elevation" of aesthetics "understood in its essentially irrational sense."

From one perspective, this opens itself to the critiques levelled at the avant-garde by Burger (1984) and Habermas (1983), where the failure of the avant-garde is understood as a product of emphasizing one sphere at the expense of the other two. As Habermas puts it: "A rationalized everyday life, therefore, could hardly be saved from cultural impoverishment through the breaking open of one sphere--art--and so providing access to just one of the specialized knowledge complexes" (1983, p. 11). Cook, in this text at least, is not aiming at the emancipatory possibilities of the aesthetic sphere as is Habermas, yet the argument still obtains in regard to the risks of inflating the (Kantian) aesthetic to the sole principle of praxis.

Habermas is speaking (as is Cook for that matter) in terms of a fully autonomous aesthetic sphere, which includes both the production and reception of artworks, itself the product of an historical process initiated by Kant. The key component of this aesthetic (which Habermas never ceases to attack; see Jay [1986], Habermas [1983, 1987]), is the fully detached, privatized aesthetic experience which appears within this process, not only as the product of the division

of labour, but also in terms of the increasing distinction between private and public and the disappearance of collective experience which is replaced by the discourse of the subject as a result of individuation processes occuring in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (more on this below, chap. III).

Once this is understood as historical, then it is first of all possible to critique it, and second, to break with it. As Bourdieu (1987) has pointed out, the philosopher "unwittingly establishes this singular [aesthetic] experience as the transhistorical norm for every aesthetic perception" without "focussing on the historicity of his reflection and the historicity of the object to which it is applied" (p. 202). For Bourdieu, it is the "social conditions of possibility" that are the key to understanding the modern aesthetic experience, which can be discovered through historical analysis, and thus the "pure" aesthetic can be denaturalized when it appears as an historical phenomenon. Once this is broken open, it becomes possible to imagine other forms of the aesthetic, and indeed the historical register gives us evidence that this is so. This becomes Gadamer's mainstay in his attempt to ground the geisteswissenschaften elsewhere than in the methodology of the natural sciences (Gadamer 1975). In Truth and Method, Kant becomes a major stumbling block, since the experience of art no longer has cognitive value, and is linked to the

practical only through analogy. Gadamer looks to the historical register both to break the hold of natural science methodology on the human sciences, and to restore aesthetic experience (and consequently, all historical objects, understood as texts) as a form of knowledge. Perhaps the most relevant aspect at this point is the intersubjective nature of this experience, over against the radical subjectivization which appears in its theoretical moment in Kant (this will be examined further in chapters II and IV).

This leads us to a second kind of aesthetics, which for the sake of argument I will call pre-Kantian (and indeed, post-Kantian as well). Prior to Kant, as Gadamer (1975) demonstrates, the aesthetic as such is not singled out as one of the autonomous spheres of culture, but rather is still connected with, and forms a component of, the other spheres, where, for instance, "cognition and pleasure, i.e. the theoretical and aesthetical attitude were hardly differentiated" (Jauss 1982, p. 22). This is something that can really only be pointed at, since the divisions have not only come to be taken for granted epistemologically, but are also firmly embedded as common sense (hence the lack of historical reflection which Bourdieu charges). The Kantian divisions, which allow us to treat the aesthetic as such, have led to an embedded linguistic practice which makes it exceedingly difficult to talk about the aesthetic <u>except</u> as a separate category. Thus, the instant we invoke the

aesthetical, we distinguish it from the other spheres. This, however, was not always the case.[2]

If it is difficult, if not impossible, to re-assimilate the aesthetic into the lifeworld (as the failure of the sublation attempted by the avant-garde demonstrates), it may nevertheless be possible to retrieve aspects which have been erased or distorted by modernity. As Gadamer admirably demonstrates, it is possible to utilize historical (aesthetical) concepts to provide a corrective for, and to ground, current practice. As Habermas' recent book attests, it is possible to view modernity retrospectively, thus opening the way to a postmodernity in which aspects of modernism can be critiqued and overcome (Habermas 1987).

Relative to the restoration and reconstruction of an aesthetics, the major problems to be overcome are manifold. In terms of aesthetic modernism, at least three immediately appear: 1) the restoration of the intersubjective aspect of aesthetic experience, which has been erased through the increasing individuation and differentiation between private and public characteristic of developing modernity; 2) the restoration of the communicative function of art, against the process of the "withering" of content, as Burger puts it, in favour of the attention to the formal characteristics of the artwork and/or medium; 3) the restoration of the link between the aesthetic sphere as a social subsystem with other subsystems that make up the lifeworld. This is a tall

order, and only partially fulfilled in what follows. The extent to which this is at all possible rests on the intuition that current events are already establishing tendencies in this direction. From one perspective, Derrida's attempts to assimilate philosophical discourse to rhetoric (as art), or the dedifferentiation strategies of postmodernism, point to the significance that the aesthetic is obtaining, albeit one which seeks to replace a perceived totality of reason with another totality (linked to a mythic Nietzschean integrated past). From an entirely different view, Habermas seeks to restore the intersubjective aspects through a theory of communicative action, both within the developing logic of an autonomous aesthetic sphere, but also, more importantly, between realms, maintaining their distinctiveness, but insisting that they be taken up together. These two positions I offer here only as indicators of directions that require the restoration of some, if not all, of the aspects outlined above.

I employ the word restoration here in a rather peculiar way. As certain disciplines turn to aesthetics for an answer to current problems, they do so as I pointed out without fulfilling the requirement to define precisely what aesthetics means. My suspicions, especially in the case of the dedifferentiation of the Kantian spheres, are that something quite different is meant than the aesthetic modernism we have been handed. For whatever reasons, it strikes me that the critique of modernism being undertaken

on all sides is somehow blind to everything except modernity itself (primarily as the discourse of the subject). If this is the case, then a postmodern aesthetics is doomed to fashion itself as an anti-modernism, but one which reproduces the blindspot of modernism, which is its own past. The extent to which that can be vitiated rests on the recognition of aesthetic practice beyond the historical horizon erected by Kant, and the recognition of its correspondence to the present.

Two very different approaches might serve to underscore the problem of ignoring the past. Firstly, Martin Jay makes the following comment in regard to postmodernism's attempt at dedifferentiation: "much postmodernist analysis has been vitiated by a confusingly ahistorical failure to recognize that certain patterns of dedifferentiation have emerged in ways that defy the attempt to say that they are always already undermined" (Jay 1986, p. 15). Ignoring the latter half of the quote for the moment, I believe Jay is correct to the extent that he underlines the problematic relation of postmodernism to history. As I hope to demonstrate later, the strongest arguments for dedifferentiation are to be discovered in the theoretical texts that appear prior to the beginning of the differentiation process itself, as signposted by Kant.[3] This does not mean, however, that I argue for a full restoration of some prior world. This, as the quote's implicit warning suggests, is impossible. I am

thinking rather in terms of Gadamer's concept of application, where the historical text is taken up in terms of its significance for the present. This I think postmodernism ignores, at the peril of reinventing the wheel. Restoration thus does not imply a substitution, nor the taking over of particular world views tel quel, but of recognizing the value of certain historical concepts (erased by modernism) in relation to the present.

The second approach, perhaps more relevant to this paper, appears in an essay by Maurice Charland (forthcoming). He suggests that as cultural studies, "in the wake of structuralist reifications," rediscovers signifying practice, it runs the risk of unknowingly reinventing rhetorical theory to make its claims:

> While rhetorical theory is quite modest in its scope in comparison with what in communication is increasingly being known as "cultural studies," the latter will end up reproducing rhetorical theory if it wishes to enquire into the meaning structures of "ideological" discourse, of publicly articulated representations, legitimations, assertions, or arguments that make an implicit or explicit claim upon consent, commitment or action. (p. 11; emphasis added)

The key point that Charland tries to make throughout his essay is the way in which one field, because of its blindspots, inadvertently labours to reinvent what has already been discovered elsewhere, beyond its disciplinary horizon. Charland's attempt to retrieve rhetoric, to "rehabilitate" it as he expresses it, is significant in regard to our essay in that, first of all, it finds its parallel here in terms of the strategy to recover an

(reconstructed) aesthetics that can add to and strengthen the explanatory power of current theory. Secondly, rhetoric and aesthetics are closely linked in some of the traditions prior to Kant. This close relationship allows the link between the political and social with the aesthetic to be made, and thus leads toward a way of understanding signifying practice in aesthetic terms.

There are three key aspects that arise from the historical background that lead to an aesthetics understood rhetorically: the experience of the work of art as a form of knowledge; the sensus communis as the locus of aesthetic judgement; and the recovery of the communicative function of the work of art. These elements are central to the second kind of aesthetics to be reconstructed (all of which have disappeared within modernist aesthetics), and provide the bridge between aesthetic experience and social praxis. In what follows, I will demonstrate that these aspects reappear within current discourse, though often disguised. Once the relationship between this second kind of aesthetics and recent social theory is uncovered, it should be possible to begin to sketch in aesthetics as a theoretical position from which to examine social/political practices.

Outline of the Text

The following chapter discusses the strengths and liabilities of various positions in relation to the idea of another level of experience, which will ultimately be called

aesthetic. Starting with a recent example of rhetorical theory, which calls for a thematization of this other level, this chapter will explore the problems of both rhetorical and postmodern positions, as well as critical theory, in relation to aesthetic experience. The idea that aesthetic experience is extra-discursive will be examined, with the suggestion that the emphasis on the textual may find these positions unable to properly address this other level. Some of the issues in the present chapter will be expanded, and the utility of an aesthetic approach will be outlined, within the context of both postmodernist and rhetorical positions. The key aspect to be retained from postmodernism is its ability to describe signifying practices from a formal perspective; from rhetoric, the concept of community and the relationship between text and action, postmodernism notwithstanding. A preliminary sketch of the relationship between mass media, political communication and aesthetics will be undertaken.

In order to grasp the conditions under which the relationship between aesthetics and community practice has disappeared, the third chapter will take the form of an excursus into the historical formation of a fully privatized aesthetic experience. Here, the increasing distance between public and private is examined from the perspective of hygiene, and demonstrates how the privatization of aesthetic experience is the by-product of overall changes in the

social. As well, some recent work will be examined which is suggestive in regard to a reversal in this tendency by offering alternate epistemologies grounded in senses other than the visual.

The fourth chapter sketches out a concept of community grounded in aesthetic judgement, against the subjective nature of judgement drawn from Kant. A comparison of the recent cultural studies work of Lawrence Grossberg with Gadamer's historical research demonstrates that a postmodern approach to social practice bears a marked correspondence to the rhetorical concept of the sensus communis. The parallels between the rhetorical tradition's understanding of community and Grossberg's "affective alliance" leads to the conclusion that current social formations can be described as communities formed around a consensus of taste, which ultimately has political significance. The "sensibility of mass culture" that Grossberg describes thus becomes the equivalent of the pre-Kantian sensus communis.

The fifth chapter explores the concept of aesthetic experience drawn from the work of Hans Robert Jauss, and its relation to the lifeworld. Once again, Grossberg's work predominates, but this time placed in the context of Jauss' reception aesthetics. Jauss' concept of modalities of identification, and his emphasis on the communicative function of art, are seen to be paralleled in Grossberg's writing, albeit expressed in an entirely different set of terms. The effects of high modernist aesthetics (especially

Adorno) are explored further, both to identify remnants in Grossberg's work which mediate his understanding of the work of art, as well as to contrast Jauss' countermove, highlighting its possibilities in regard to mass media research.

The concluding chapter returns to the discussion of political communication. The work of the previous chapters will be employed to demonstrate, on the one hand, the appearance of what are effectively pre-Kantian aesthetical ideas within 'post-Kantian' discussions of the social and political (although they are not named as such), and on the other, the efficacy of thematizing the level of aesthetic experience in relation to the effects of signifying practices. The use of the media for political purposes will be examined in relation to the concepts sketched out in previous chapters, and a modest proposal will be put forward in regard to a more comprehensive model of analysis that would conjoin an aesthetic approach with other strategies of discourse analysis.

Cautionary Notes

In drawing these lengthy remarks to a close, there are two final points I would like to make. The first is that the self-evident density of some of the passages that follow belies the cautiousness with which the topic of aesthetics is approached. At times, the central arguments recede behind extensive digressions. The necessity of proceeding

in such a manner arises from the uncovering of relationships between current research and reconstructed concepts from secondary sources, and the need to exercise caution in doing so. As the title of this paper suggests, this is a preliminary work, and thus must sketch out the basis upon which further research can be pursued, and which must, even as hastily as it does in this case, inquire into small matters at the expense of larger ones.

The second point arises from an argument that Habermas makes, and which hovers over this work like a liability statement that precedes the dangers that follow.

> A reified everyday praxis can be cured only by creating unconstrained interaction of the cognitive with the moral-practical and the aesthetic-expressive elements. Reification cannot be overcome by forcing just one of those highly stylized cultural spheres to open up and become more accessible. Instead, we see under certain circumstances a relationship emerge between terroristic activities and the over-extension of any one of these spheres into other domains: examples would be tendencies to aestheticize politics, or to replace politics by moral rigorism or to submit it to the dogmatism of a doctrine. (1983, pp. 11-12)

In what follows, I shall make the argument that it is the attempt to "replace politics by moral rigorism" that ultimately has the effect of the "tendencies to aestheticize politics." As the coercive force of good reasons (what Habermas terms the "unforced force" of the better argument) dwindles in the face of an increasing disinvestment in the ideological structures of the lifeworld, it is replaced by an increasing investment in aesthetic strategies. Countered by a moralism which condemns this tendency as superficial,

politics paradoxically finds itself in a position where it must of necessity employ aesthetic strategies to make its moral claims. The effort to provide moral leadership requires the setting of a good example, thus a de-emphasis of logos in favour of ethos. In doing so, the example must be adapted to the constraints of the medium through which politics is now presented, television, and must compete with the other texts present alongside it, forcing it to the level of aesthetic simulacra characteristic of the medium.

This, however, will be reserved for later discussion, and is not the key concern at present. As we can easily see from the above quote, Habermas points to the fact that, acknowledging the historical processes that have led to the differentiation of the cultural spheres, one sphere cannot be elevated at the expense of the other two. This essay lays itself open to precisely that accusation. Certainly, I present arguments for the restoration of the cognitive aspects of aesthetic reception, as well as build a relation to moral-practical domains. Nonetheless, this is not an attempt at the dissolution of the boundaries between them, nor a tacit elevation of the aesthetic at the expense of other spheres. I agree with Habermas to the extent that the aesthetic must be thought as differentiated from other spheres, toward which the processes of modernity have led us (indeed, the fact of writing this must reflect on the usage of the word aesthetic as indicating something other than

that available in the other spheres). But, at the same time, I would maintain that its specific logic also contains elements from the other cultural domains which cannot be evacuated without emptying the aesthetic of any significance whatsoever. Especially important (as Derrida perhaps demonstrates) is the undermining of epistemological categories to include forms of experience such the aesthetic as valid forms of knowledge, which often do not lend themselves well to discursive 'redemption.' The past, only cursorily examined in what follows, possibly offers the answer in the form of other epistemologies beyond rational discursive logics (as Foucault has demonstrated). Yet I cannot ignore Habermas' claim, and erect it as a sign over the door: as modernism erased its past, so too do we risk the same.

NOTES

1. Of course this is not the first time that Kant has been the subject of a revisionist strategy: "I conceive of Kant as the first real Modernist," writes Clement Greenberg (1973, p. 67), thus making him the theorist par excellence of modernist aesthetics.

2. I should point out that Umberto Eco disagrees with this, making the argument in his Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages (1986) that a distinct aesthetic sensibility is already evident in an analysis of medieval texts.

3. This is also a problem for poststructuralism. Habermas points out that Derrida's attempt to reduce philosophy to rhetoric is conducted in ignorance of precisely those traditions I am referring to:

> It is not as though Derrida concerned himself with these controversial questions in terms of viewpoints familiar from the history of philosophy. If he had done so, he would have had to relativize the status of his own project in relation to the tradition that was shaped from Dante to Vico, and kept alive through Hamann, Humboldt, and Droysen, down to Dilthey and Gadamer. For the protest against the Platonic-Aristotelian primacy of the logical over the rhetorical that is raised anew by Derrida was articulated in this tradition. (Habermas 1987, pp. 187-188).

CHAPTER II

THEMATIZING THE AESTHETIC

In this chapter, I want to discuss the liabilities and strengths of postmodern and rhetorical theory in relation to political communication. In regard to the problematic status of ideology, a two-tiered model will be suggested which would differentiate between institutional systems and signifying practices, in order to leave room for a postmodernist approach to signification, but also maintain a conception of embedded power. From this perspective, postmodern theory provides the means by which to engage mediated discourse, and rhetorical theory its effects on social practices. I will utilize as a vehicle for this discussion a recent example of rhetorical writing, which is both suggestive and problematic. The major goals of this chapter are: 1) to thematize (aesthetic) experience as a level of effect unaccounted for by ideology critique; 2) to demonstrate the utility of combining postmodern and rhetorical theories to engage this; and 3) to sketch out the role of the media in simulating forms of experience.

The 'Problem' of Ideology

One of the problems which one is faced with today when embarking upon an inquiry into the political sphere is the extent to which conventional ideological categories no longer seem to work as a means to identify either particular constituencies or groups competing for legislative power. It is increasingly difficult to assign particular groups with a particular ideology and distribute them along that imaginary line running from fascist right through liberal middle to radical left. The implicit assumption normally invoked in doing so is that behind a particular designation lies a coherent set of beliefs constitutive of a particular ideological structure, where the name stands in for the set; in other words, the topographic model works to designate a particular space for each group, and it is assumed that each group operates within a systematized space in such a way that the identification of one trait implies, and can be linked through inductive logic, to the entire set. If the constellation will no longer cohere, conventional ideological categorizations will lose their explanatory power. They cannot account for the seemingly uncharacteristic behaviours which as occult properties are symptomatic of a deficiency from a theoretical perspective.

This problem arises against the backdrop of Baudrillard's critique of sign functions. In this model, ". . . the signs exchanged in communication have no referent. Capitalism detaches the signifier from the

signified, making the signifier its own signified" (Poster 1975, p. 9). If it is the case that the signifieds (and referents) disappear, there is no longer any material upon which ideology can operate, if its scene of operation is "behind the back" of language. In a representational economy in which the sign refers to or guarantees some reality, ideology can do its work. However, when "the signifier becomes its own referent," and "the sign no longer designates anything at all," there is no meaning which can be distorted. Thus for postmodernism, ideology collapses along with meaning, and the real disappears into its simulacrum:

> All the hypotheses of manipulation are reversible in an endless whirligig. For the manipulation is a floating causality where positivity and negativity engender and overlap with one another, where there is no longer any active and passive. It is by putting an arbitrary stop to this revolving causality that principle of political reality can be saved. It is by the simulation of a conventional, restricted perspective field, . . . that a political credibility can be maintained. . . . But if the entire cycle of any act or event is envisaged in a system where linear continuity and dialectical polarity no longer exist, in a field unhinged by simulation, then all determination evaporates . . . (Baudrillard 1983, p. 30-31)

This is clearly bad news for the analysis of political messages, since it implies dispensation with ideology. The collapse of power in the implosion of the real implies that meaning also disappears, and hence ideology understood as the historical struggle over those meanings. Paradoxically, this appears to be so, and yet not so. There is the intuition that ideologies "mean" less, but that at the same

time, one is the subject of power. As Lawrence Grossberg (1987a) suggests, what appears

> . . . is a crisis in the relationship between common sense and faith. Within this gap, it is not the case that one doesn't live ideological values (or that nothing matters) but that these seem not to speak to our affective mood. It is as if one were to experience and in certain ways live values without actually investing in them (it doesn't matter what matters) because our affective investments seem to have already been determined in another scene. (p. 44)

I will return to this "other scene" shortly. For now, I simply want to emphasize what appears as a marked ambivalence relative to ideology, the way Grossberg describes the loss of faith, where "possible ideological relevance collapses into its extreme affective images" (Ibid.). As this last comment suggests, it is the image which becomes the locus of faith, in terms of its emotional, rather than logical, sense. The paradox perhaps lies here, between the "seems to be so" of meaningfulness in some affective sense, and the "seems not to be so" of its meaningfulness in a logical sense (a a guarantee of the real).

Yet as Grossberg readily admits, there are still effects of "both an active textuality and an active audience" over against the "postmodernist's trap of describing both cultural practices and social reality in the same terms" (1984b, pp. 100-101). This distinction is a key to the solution of the problem of ideology. By this splitting in two, it is then possible to account for both

the presence of power and a non-ideological model of signification. As I put forward in chapter one, this is contingent upon understanding the tempo of the social as non-synchronic. What this in effect means is that postmodernism as a practice and postmodernity as a period are not synonymous with each other, and must be differentiated from each other. Against the totality (of the collapse of the real) that postmodernist theory presupposes, we need to make this distinction between "cultural practices and social reality," or what I will call signifying practice and institutional structure. This allows us to maintain both sides of the intuition (that ideology does/does not exist) if we accept the postmodernist position with a limitation, as a version of signifying practice, but do inflate this claim as a symptom of an overall, total transition in the whole of the lifeworld. If institutional change is not necessarily synchronic with either (postmodern) theoretical or social praxis (and I see no reason why it should be), then power, postmodernism notwithstanding, still operates in its traditionally understood sense.

This is an essential insight for this essay. In terms of a discussion of political communication, the reason for bringing this out is fairly straightforward: the institutions which comprise the legislative apparatus are still in place, and are the products of modern thought and operate under its modalities. Whether or not there is a

contradiction between those structures and current social formations (which is a concern of this essay), we still have a stake in them, since they continue to have material/concrete effects on the lifeworld. Therefore, I do not suggest that we dispense with ideology altogether, as might be the argument from a postmodernist perspective. At the same time, the retention of ideology does not imply the rejection of postmodernism tel quel either, since as I hope to demonstrate below, it has explanatory power in relation to political practice in its current manifestation.

The Aesthetic as a Level of Inquiry

The question that arises is: If the legislative apparatuses are still in place, and the "right" to appropriate them, to legitimize that appropriation of institutional power is still necessary (given its existence and effects), and also if legitimation can no longer be arrived at through ideological manoeuvers, from whence does it arise? If it is required that political groups legitimize their control over state apparatuses, it becomes necessary to understand how political strategies work to constitute subject positions if that is no longer accomplished by purely ideological forms of interpellation. In effect, we must begin to thematize what Grossberg refers to as the "other scene" of investment.

Given the decreasing effect of ideology, coupled with the need to seek legitimation, it is clear that political

interests must employ discursive strategies that correspond to prevailing signifying (cultural) practices. I will argue throughout this paper that correspondingly, this requires another level of analysis to be articulated together with ideology critique, which I will call aesthetic. By suggesting that those strategies may offer forms of identification that are aesthetical rather than purely ideological, it may be possible to re-establish a certain amount of coherence by moving to this "other scene," if there is no longer any necessary correspondence between name and practice.

From one perspective, this non-correspondence implies irrationality, symptomatic of a bifurcation between signifier and signified; in other words, the withering of meaning. However, this may become meaningful and amenable to resolution by shifting to this other level of inquiry. This is not to say or imply a return to rational stability; on the contrary, rationality itself (understood as the adequation between word and thing--_adequatio intellectui ad rem_) may be the barrier to a fuller understanding of political rhetorical strategy. Hence the need to undertake an examination of the usual methods of 'decoding' political formations. In what follows, I will suggest that the two most often used forms of intervention--rhetoric and critical theory--rely on a fixed signifer/signified relation, on fully meaning-immanent language (where ideology critique

simply implies full restoration). If, however, that relation is disturbed, both of these forms lose their viability, and rationality itself blocks access to other modes of understanding. Underneath this is the question of how it is possible to form a broad constituency without a coherent platform in the traditionally understood sense of party division, given the bricolage of the ideological patchwork. In a somewhat paradoxical formulation, I suggest that non-meaning at one level can be made meaningful at another: if, on the one hand, interpellation through a structural-functionalist model no longer appears to operate on the social formation to create (symbolic) subject positions, the discursive strategy of ideology critique is blocked; and if, on the other, rhetoric's dependency on a fully-centered human agency assumes a fixed relation between text and meaning, neither can it respond to a situation where meaning is scarce. If postmodernist theory's gambit is correct to the extent that everything is on the surface of the signifier itself, then another means by which to make sense of apparent non-sense at the ideological level is essential. If we want to try and grasp the nature of the formation of communities or constituencies under these conditions, we must attempt to define another level of analysis, the aesthetical, which does not necessarily operate semiotically, and to that extent may escape the aporias and deficiencies of textual analysis when applied to political communication. I suggest that the positing of a

level of experience beyond the field of discursive decoding strategies opens the epistemological domain to a better understanding of the way in which power can work through aesthetical strategies to constitute subject positions and communities around the axis of taste, as well as through conventional ideological interpellations.

The Rhetorical Straw Man

To an extent, this is not an original insight on my part, since it is clear that other authors are attempting to sketch a similar hypothesis. In this section, I want to examine an example of rhetorical theory which is both suggestive and problematic. Although not necessarily representative of the field, it offers an interesting way to approach the problems of analysis. In a recent issue of The Quarterly Journal of Speech, W. Lance Haynes (1988) tries to account for the kinds of experience engendered by media that are left unthematized by what he terms "literate approaches" to "video rhetoric" (p. 93). This essay is both interesting in its claim for the necessity of widening the terrain of rhetoric to include "rhetorical processes that cannot be optimally studied, taught, or used by traditional literate means," and at the same time, marred by an excessive humanism of the McLuhanesque variety, in its conclusion which argues for the restoration of community through video technologies (p. 98). Despite this, Haynes offers some insights which are suggestive in regard to both the

shortcomings of discursive analysis and in the positing of another level of experience which works to "alter predispositions."

Leaving the problematic status of disposition aside for the moment, we can sum up Haynes' argument in a relatively simple formula: the emphasis on textuality fostered by literacy blocks the movement to engage with extra-discursive factors appearing in the rhetorical situation which simulate certain forms of affective experience. The key strategy here is to suggest that the study of electronic media needs to be undertaken from a different perspective since the media engages the subject at another level of experience than that of the discursive. Haynes suggests that this other level remains inaccessible from the viewpoint of a "consciousness" mediated by literacy, which constrains analysis within a mode of propositional logic. It is, however, Haynes claims, possible to imagine another level of experience which is constitutive of oral culture, and differs from the literate in that it is situational and contextual, rather than concerned with the rationality of a given argument (p.92). In this sense, it is concerned with action in the context of the lifeworld, with praxis and community, over against the abstract stasis of the written text. Drawing on Walter Ong, Haynes posits a form of "oral consciousness" which, in terms of the reception of electronic media, operates at an experiential level which is

situational, where the critical faculties normally engaged in evaluating the relations between discursive elements are suspended in favour of a shared experience invoked by the medium. This, however, engenders serious problems for the critic:

> As literate critics and teachers, we are conditioned to value pragmatically, to search for the means to construct, if not a step-by-step set of instructions, at least a checklist of observables to include, or of precepts we may adapt to our own ends. We are conditioned to search for them in the text and there is no text.. Indeed, there cannot be a text that records the experience itself; there can be only metaphor that brings us hints and glimmers, that recalls--from our experience in life, perhaps even our genetic store--those feelings of communal celebration that transcend our individuality. (p.88)

Although I grate at the celebratory language, especially the notion of a biological essentialism, the main point of this quote marks out the singular difficulty faced when attempting to elaborate phenomena which do not seem to have a textual basis, and as such resist the usual methods of inquiry. To an extent, however, I suspect that an untheorized notion of metaphor, and the usage of a certain style of language drawn from phenomenology (notably in Haynes' repeated use of an undefined concept of intentionality) themselves work to block inquiry into such phenomena as experience, by consigning them to that "of which we cannot write" as the title of his essay suggests. (In relation to the media, this is perhaps even more problematic, since the kind of "being-in-the-world" phenomenology he describes in regard to the existential

relation between speaker and audience does not exist: a "being-in-front-of-the-tv" is a very different thing.)

There are two points in this regard I would like to touch upon briefly here. The first is the aspect of textuality itself. The text is viewed in Haynes' essay as the product of the intentionality of an author, as are the extra-textual factors which Haynes seeks to thematize. From this vantage point, the efficacy of a particular text is simple enough to determine: compare the intention of the author with the subsequent actions of the audience. The implicit assumption here is of course that one can in fact know the author's intention. In this model, the audience is simply persuaded, through the "application of reason" within a propositional logic, to alter their predispositions. We have in large part the replication of the standard communication model of the "effects" tradition, which identifies a sender and receiver, and tests the impact of the message on the basis of a change in behaviour after reception. The text-as-message in this model is fully transparent, acting only as the vehicle between human agents. Without re-opening the criticism of this particular construction of the communication process, suffice it to say at this point that it ignores the effects of mediation by language itself in the form of ideological distortions of meaning; this applies both to the production of texts and to their reception. In this regard, the notion of predisposition used by Haynes exposes itself to critique,

with the suggestion that those predispositions are not formed through an act of free choice, but are in fact the product of the acquisition of language which is always already ideologically inflected. Even assuming that the strict determinism of the Althusserian/Lacanian model is too totalizing, we are still faced with the problem of determining to what extent ideology places limits on the horizon of what can be spoken.

I have no desire to launch an attack on rhetoric here, but want simply to point to some of the assumptions running underneath the notion of textuality as brought forward in Haynes' essay. The major problem is that those assumptions are ultimately grafted onto his discussion of the other terrain he is trying to open up. Despite the fact that he wishes to recognize the limitations of reason in relation to this other level (". . . reasoned deliberation, the cornerstone of our tradition, is firmly rooted in literacy . . ." [p. 92]), he still considers the media to be essentially rhetorical in the sense of the persuasion model. I would suggest that, as in the case of textuality, an essentialist humanism blocks understanding of "effects" at both levels. This is not to suggest the insertion of ideology critique into this second level (since, as I have suggested, this is probably unworkable), but rather to deflate the notion of a human subject as fully self-transparent. In the same way as ideological inflection of

sign systems works to decenter the subject at the level of language (langue), the same processes are at work at this other level. (I will examine this in chapter four and five.)

The second point I want to raise is in regard to the status of metaphor, the "hints and glimmers" as Haynes calls it, which is an extension of the question concerning textuality. Both poststructuralism and postmodernism in different ways have opened up the problem of the relation between the trope and 'standard' language. Poststructuralism suggests that the trope itself opens up a new space of reading through the denial of any fixed relation between the signifier and the signified; thus the constant deferral of meaning implies that the trope has in fact the same status as 'standard' language, and that one cannot be thought without the other, and that the trope is a parasitical presence working from the beginning to erode the supposed fixed relationship between word and meaning. As Derrida (1986) mockingly asks Saussure in relation to onomatopoeia: "Does an element depart from language [langue] when it does not conform to its presumed semantic origin? So what are the 'organic elements in a linguistic system'? Words? But 'words' can become onomatopoeic, through the grafting of function, in whole or in part, by decomposition or recomposition, detachment or reattachment" (p. 92-93). This suggests that the authenticity of the "organic" elements are always already contaminated at the origin. The point I wish to make here is that the relation between

poetic and standard language assumes the organicity of the latter upon which the former stands in relation. Thus, in regard to Haynes' essay, the necessarily fixed relationship of word to semantic content forces the transition to metaphor in order to make 'sense' out of this other level of experience. The question that arises is whether there is any difference (or, more provocatively, whether it is all difference), or whether that experience was and is always there in the beginning, inaccessible to rational thought. If, however, metaphor can be taken as the status of all language, mediating between our present and the lost origin which the text seeks to make present, the distinction disappears. The suggestion on Derrida's part that experience itself would be a textual effect is, I think, still open to debate, but I stress that the distinction between a standard and figurative language made by Haynes is open to scrutiny and possibly blocks ways in which this other level might be articulated. The metaphor itself works to inscribe the line between cognitive/rational forms of epistemology and forms of experience (such as the aesthetic) which have been expelled from the category of knowledge through the operations of reason itself.

Postmodernist theory, in its turn, works on the collapse of the distinction between metaphoric and standard language. The elision of the "as if" relationship between statements about the world and their referents tends toward

the erasure of the metaphorical status of theoretical statements. In its most radical formulations (i.e. Baudrillard), the signifieds (and consequently their referents) disappear, and the signifiers circulate freely in a system of pure exchange. The most provocative aspect of this situation is the absence of mediation, since there is no longer any meaning 'behind' a given signifier; hence the signifier no longer performs the mediation between socially constructed meaning and the subject. Once the signifier is detached from its signified, ideology ceases to work in its traditionally understood manner, that is, in terms of the historical struggle over signification, where the maintainance of particular constellations of meaning is at stake. Power, normally understood to operate on the site of control over the reproduction of social meaning, thus comes into question. To suggest, however, that this marks its disappearance is, as I have already expressed, questionable. As I mentioned at the beginning, power itself does not necessarily disappear as a result of reconstructive theoretical statements about it. Postmodernism certainly provides an accurate symptomatic reading of the work of collage within various language games, and to that extent is valuable in the way it marks the effect of the deflation of meaning, but by staking itself on this it is blocked from reading the current scene, since it has to assume that meaning disappears everywhere simultaneously. However, the collapse of the signifier/ signified relation at the level

of representation is not necessarily synchronic with structural collapse at the institutional level. From this perspective, it has more the characteristics of a legitimation problem (in the Habermasian [1975] sense), where the meaning deficit certainly problematizes the way in which institutions secure their legitimacy, but doesn't thereby turn them into theoretical fictions. Instead, it marks the ways in which signifying (rhetorical) strategies are potentially reworked in order to accomodate the loss of meaning (thus possibly marking the transition to a motivation problem?). The process of accomodation is between the impairment of ideology as a strategy for constructing subject positions, and an institutional structure which still depends on it. Whether that will ultimately fall apart remains to be seen; what is crucial to keep in mind is that the structure is still in place, and in that sense, power still operates. However, instead of constructing positions on the ideological terrain to be filled by subjects, it is shifted to the aesthetic plane. Legitimation, in the form of consensus at the level of the aesthetic, implies the reworking of power strategies to accomodate the loss of meaning at the level of conventional interpellative programmes, in order to maintain control over the institutional structures which still operate on and in the social in general. In this sense, shifting the ground does not constitute the disappearance of power, but through

the postmodern reading, indicates its displacement onto a different terrain in order to obtain the necessary consent to maintain hegemony over the "modernist" institutions in which the residues of power still reside.

The question then becomes whether or not we can consider Haynes' thesis a positive contribution in the face of critiques outside of rhetoric's paradigm. The absence of a sophisticated conception of the subject or audience seems to militate against the argument, since the elision of socialization processes at the ideological level (which I am conflating with what he calls "reason" at the level of "literate consciousness") tends to undermine the reader's confidence in the subsequent formulations. As Maurice Charland (personal communication) has pointed out, rhetoric "has begged the question through such reductions as 'interest' or 'reasonableness', and certainly has not recognized that the concept of subjectivity is problematic." In the case of Haynes, the undefined status of both the subject and the notion of disposition are simply imported tel quel into the discussion of the second level. At the same time, the shift to metaphor tends to block the possibility of articulating the effects this other level may have. One of the major problems is determining to what extent the trope functions as a means by which forms of experience that are not amenable to cognitive/rational theoretical constructions are consigned to the figurative. I would argue that the collapse of the distinction between

metaphorical and standard language possibly provides the opening whereby a recovery of affective experiential data might be effected. This is where postmodernist theory might be of significant value, in that the processes of simulation which constitute the circulation of free-floating signifiers do their "work" by producing affective associations that do not have meaning "content" operating "behind the back" of the text, in the sense of ideology, but rather function as indexes or pointers which generate metonymic chains of deferral in the subject's memory on the basis of precisely that inability to assign meaning to a given textual construction. This is a non-semiotic process, and conforms more to the workings of symbolic processes, which cannot be contained within the semiotic model (Sperber 1975, p. 140).

Power, then, might be seen to be operating precisely on the site of the simulation of those affective experiences, producing symbolic associations with the subject's own experience. This is exactly the type of situation it seems that Haynes is trying to describe. In a rather curious manner, he in fact emulates the language of postmodernism within his text to make his claim: in relation to an example of speech, "he simulates a spiritual experience"; in relation to television, "to comprehend the experience these commercials simulate"; "video simulates experience far more readily and with greater intensity" (pp. 86, 89, 93; emphasis added); and in terms that are reminiscent of

Baudrillard:

> There is a sense of super-reality about video that charges the altered disposition with a sense of deja-vu, that renders us wearing those denims because we already do. Because we just have. We will not litter, we will wear our seat belts, we will visit our stockbroker, because we already do these things, every day, as members of the television audience. . . . since video messages are ephemeral, revisions, adaptations, virtual changes in how reality is depicted may be cast relatively unhampered by what has gone before. (pp. 93, 96)

As we see, the essay addresses the notions of hyper-reality and simulation that are at the core of postmodernist readings of the media; this is the perspective from which Haynes' essay starts to look more interesting. In a rather fascinating way, through rhetoric he seems to arrive at the terrain of the postmodern unconsciously, through the sense that rhetoric in its current conditions cannot by itself account for certain media effects; this ultimately sends him toward the kinds of hyperbolic descriptions which mark the postmodern reading of the relation between the social and the media. This seems to provide the opening to suggest the utility of some of the postmodernist tenets as a corrective to the excesses of the rhetorical position.

On the other hand, the advantage of approaching this problematic from the rhetorical perspective lies in rhetoric's strengths in regard to praxis, that is, in its concern with the effects of texts on the re-orientation of action in the lifeworld. Unlike critical theory, which (in the extreme positions of the Frankfurt School) moved toward a retreat into a hermetic form of high culture in the face

of a world they considered to be fully instrumentalized, or the postmodernist tendency toward the "culture of cynicism" (positions which are not that far apart), rhetoric still focusses on the possibility of the formation of communities as the motors of social change. Although I have suggested that the increasing irrationality of the public sphere engendered by the scarcity of meaning--which tends to erode rhetoric's arguments around the reasonableness of given texts--necessitates the consideration of other positions, rhetoric itself may offer a corrective to the excesses of both critical and postmodernist theory by keeping our attention focussed on the level of praxis and the social formation. The advantage of rhetoric, it seems to me, is precisely in that it refuses to either retreat from the quotidian or take a cynical stance toward it, since its stake in humanism makes the material/concrete situation of the subject and his/her practical options in that situation its subject. This is not an argument for humanism by any means, and I have already noted some of the problems it creates, but is to say rather that rhetoric, by focussing on community formation, gives us a tool for intervention into the present which, in combination with the postmodernist critique offered above, allows the possibility of articulating more fully the present political context. This might be especially effective if, as I have posed, there is a disjunction between social praxis and institutional

structure, since postmodernism provides explanatory power in regard to the nature of signifying practices which determine the circulation and effect of political messages, and rhetoric offers a means to understand their effects in terms of the formation of communities essential to secure the consensus required to maintain the processes of power in the institutional setting.

The Role of the Media

If we return to Haynes' essay, we see how important the notion of community is in relation to the media. He attempts to describe the operations of the media at the 'non-literate' level as constitutive of a certain type of community through the media simulation of an "idealized world":

> Participants in this sort of non-literate video are . . . purely engaged in apprehension of the experience . . . There is no trace of anything presented in these commercials to distract the intellect . . . The audience is transported into a mythical world in which it is drawn to participate--albeit vicariously--as fully as viewing conditions permit, a world ontologically insulated against noise of any kind, a warm sheltering community . . . And socially, watching television is indeed a communal act. . . . We know implicitly when we watch television that countless others watch as well; we have the tacit sense that wherever and whenever the signal can be received, others respond as we do and thus share the communal experience. (pp. 90-91)

And immediately following:

> Although this sense may not be an artifact of the video medium per se, it is nevertheless a factor with which current efforts to understand video must contend.

Initially, I tended to disagree with this statement, since

it suggested that the television audience was the equivalent of a community. The television audience is normally characterized not as a community but simply as an aggregate, whose only common factor is that of watching. Television is usually regarded as crucial to this distinction, where the effect of mass media is in having created the conditions for the conversion of the community (as it is figured in the Deweyan 'face-to-face' relationship) into the inert mass audience. In the more traditional approaches to mass media, such as escape and dependency theories, the notion of a community formed around a praxis is precisely what is rendered impossible by television, since watching is characterized as withdrawal and inaction. From the postmodernist side, it is precisely this conversion into a mass that marks the point where the social is no longer representable, since any notion of difference simply collapses into the "black hole" of the mass itself. From both perspectives, politics becomes impossible: in the first case, through the inertia induced by watching; in the second, due to the "refusal" of the mass to be represented, which precludes a site where community might be formed (Baudrillard 1983a, p. 43).

Although both are powerful ways of constructing the social, they both assume that electronic technologies have a totalizing effect on the subject and over the lifeworld (or rather, have the effect of turning the subject into a surface upon which the media projects their images

[Baudrillard 1983b, p. 129]), such that the media are (to paraphrase) in the last instance determining. I would suggest that the media here stand in for the Althusserian I.S.A., in the sense that they become a monolithic entity whose all-pervasiveness is inescapable. The disappearance of the scene and of the difference between public and private in Baudrillard's formulation is a product of an ineluctable process brought about by electronic media (1983b, p. 128) This, however, has to be tempered by a less functionalistic view of the media. The collapse of the distinction between public and private is in itself not necessarily a negative process, and may in fact restore the conditions for a community on the basis of a collective experience that is currently denied as a result of the effects of the increased privatization of experience brought about through the historical development of the bourgeois individual. Nonetheless, it is rather <u>too</u> provocative to suggest that all of this may be purely the product of the increasing presence of electronic networks. Although media are determinate to a large degree in re-figuring the social (even if only from the perspective of their economic role), the inflation of their role at the expense of other historical factors is highly questionable.

Without trying to downplay their effects on the subject, which we can all acknowledge as significant, I would argue that the subject, as a product of history, is at

any given juncture the intersection point of a multiplicity of (competing) discourses, of which the media are one set. Any number of studies have indicated that although the media exert influences on subject formation, they have to be contextualized within the particular relations that are constitutive for a given subject (Bausinger 1984, Morley 1986, for example). This was acknowledged to an extent even in the highly criticized studies undertaken by Lazarsfeld in the forties and fifties (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). The face-to-face, even if only that of the family, is contiguous with media exposure, and suggests that the overall effects of media must be taken up in the context of the subject's social position. In other words, I am contending that the pervasiveness of the media does not in and of itself constitute the disappearance of community, although it may go some way toward restructuring its internal relations. The notion that Haynes brings forward in this regard, that the sense of community "may not be an artifact of the video medium per se" is a crucial insight, in that it recognizes the multiple determinations that not only produce the subject, but also the way in which a given subject "reads" the media. This is to say that the social/historical conjuncture not only determines to an extent the way in which media construct their messages, but it is also determinate in forming the categories by which the subject gains access to those messages. If that is the case, it allows us to make sense of the disjunction between

institutional structures and mediated messages into which the subject is inserted, since the field is opened up to historical/structural determinations which are not the sole product of the media. It also allows us to retain the notion of community, if we insist that there are sites for the production of discourses which might lead to those kinds of social formations, such as community, which are the products of discursive processes outside of the purview of the media. Community itself, as an "artifact" is not a discursive product of the media, but the media may provide the conditions, as Haynes suggests, for its formation.

The condition under which media might lead to the formation of communities consists in their position as the central conduit for political communication, along with their role as the delivery system, so to speak, of the images of the social itself (Tuchman 1978). If the media are the frame through which the social is constructed, and if most political information is obtained through the media, then media determine to a large degree what "shape" political messages might take. Without discounting the historical juncture which includes discourses and experiences arising in other areas of the lifeworld that (over)determine the reception of the media, media still play a key role in that the criteria upon which a community might be formed will be derived in large part from the media; in short, it is the media which provides the information both constitutive of, and acted upon by, communities.

Thus, we must also consider how the media themselves work to restructure messages within various strategies competing for audience attention. In effect, we must acknowledge the agenda-setting function of the media. Perhaps more importantly, we must bear in mind how those strategies work not only to set the agenda, but also to redefine the nature of what constitutes an agenda by shifting the focus within a particular practice.

Firstly, I want to consider the role reportorial strategies play in redefining political practice through its interpretive acts. Daniel C. Hallin (1985), in an essay reminiscent of Tuchman (1978) and Gallagher (1982), notes how the notion of objectivity, embedded in journalism since the end of the second world war, is restructured during the Vietnam conflict when the interpretation of reality became a problematic and contentious site:

> In some ways, in fact, the 1960's and 1970's, precisely because the interpretation of reality had become subject to political debate, increased the journalist's and the news organization's need to appear strictly objective. The journalist had to provide analysis without seeming to depart from disinterested professionalism. And the easiest way to accomplish this was to focus on questions of strategy, effectiveness and technique, questions which did not touch directly on conflicts of interest or clashes over the ends and values of political life. (p. 130)

What Hallin calls "detached realism" which is already part of the repertoire of the commercial press undergoes a significant shift in focus away from substantive issues toward what he terms the "technical angle" in which the effects and interests involved with particular policy issues

are displaced by commentary on such things as whether ground was gained or lost, the size of a demonstrating crowd, or the "battle of wits" in a presidential debate. As Hallin notes, citing the early Reagan administration's economic revision, "The political future of a David Stockman is easier to assess with an attitude of detached realism than the actual policy of trickle-down economics, which inevitably raises the issue of how the interests and values affected by economic policy are weighed" (p.130-131). Thus, we see that not only is the agenda-setting function significant, but also the way in which the perspective on the topic of choice is reshaped in the reduction and control of contentious issues.

A more recent example from Canada also demonstrates this change in the media's reconstruction of events. In early March 1988, the Minister for External Affairs, Joe Clark, delivered a speech to the Canada-Israel Committee condemning the actions of the Israeli government in the Palestinian uprising. In what was clearly a significant departure from previous government statements, the question in the media became, not as one might expect, how does this constitute a policy shift towards Israel?, but rather, was this speech vetted by the Prime Minister's Office? The focus shifted from the policy toward discussion of whether Clark's statements were "coordinated" with the P.M.O., and concern revolved around whether there was a breakdown in

internal communications within the government.[1] As Hallin suggests in his paper, the media did not concentrate on the possible effects of the policy, so much as on whether there were signs of mismanagement and conflict between members of the government.

This shift in media attention is significant in that if knowledge of the political is derived primarily from the media and through the frame of a historically specific reportorial construction, then the production of political "news" is bound to affect readings, to the extent that it is the material of those readings. From one perspective, this change seems to conform to the idea of aestheticization. The move away from a discussion of substantive issues not only props up the ideologically inflected notion of objectivity, precisely through its appearance of avoiding any commitment at all, but at the same time, by concentrating on the "technical angle," moves the discussion to the formal/aesthetical level and a type of diegetical description of conflicts between player on a political stage. The resolution is of course either comic or tragic: in the case of Clark, he is either wedded to the Prime Minister, or cast from the ranks. In either solution, the issue is not whether the policy makes sense, but whether or not Clark can be restored.

Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, are the governments' interventions into the media on their own behalf. It is conceivably the "disinterested

professionalism" evinced by the press that has led to a significant presence by governments and their agencies in the media. In terms of media buying for instance, the federal government is in first place, spending substantially more money than the largest corporations in Canada (Marketing, March 7, 1988, p. 21). In effect, the media become the site for political contestation, the "other scene" to which Grossberg refers. As I will expand upon later, it is through the simulation effects made possible by the media that governments seek to establish a consensus, through modalities of aesthetic identification with forms of conduct portrayed in government advertising.

At one level, it is evident that the governments seek to compete on the same terrain as the press itself, in effect using the media to promote its interests in face of what is often perceived (from the government's perspective) as a hostile press corps, accused of distortion. There is of course an obvious logic here, since if the media are the primary conduit, then direct access is more favourable than access mediated by the press. Hence the development of such things as "conservative tv," a news service provided by the ruling Progressive Conservative Party, or the recent series of "family education" commercials produced by the B.C. government.

This, however, is only one dimension. At another level, on the basis of the arguments put forward in this

chapter, the collapse of ideology precludes contestation over substantive issues through discursive claims, if there is no guarantee in regard to their meanings. In regard to the increasing gap between affect and ideology that Grossberg underlines, the governments seek to legitimize their claim to power elsewhere, in the other scene of the media, where simulation of fictional lifeworlds, trans-world configurations as the logicians call them, allows for the projection of idealized pasts and futures to be identified with. Here, the governments move toward aesthetic strategies to back their claims, which can no longer be substantiated through "good reasons."

The examination of this utilization of the media by governments will be undertaken later (chapters five and six). For now, I simply want to point toward this important shift wherein the governments bypass the traditional outlets, i.e. the press release, in favour of direct intervention into the scene of the media. This complexifies further the set of determinations at work on the terrain I am trying to describe. It is important here to keep in mind both the aspects of production and reception together. Thus, although I have been concentrating primarily on the formation of communities and the political strategies that might be at work constituting them, the excluded middle are the media themselves. In order to avoid transferring the notion of a transparent delivery system into the discussion of the aesthetic, the role of the media needs to be

foregrounded. It is not adequate to simply shift our attention to reception and consumption and concentrate on decoding at the site of the audience, without trying to give an account of the material on which it is brought to bear. As the above comments suggest, the media themselves are determinate to some extent in the process of aestheticization, and their own institutional concerns cannot be discounted. As well, as governments intervene in the media marketplace, they will be constrained through the necessity to compete for attention with other texts that circulate in that domain. In this regard, Haynes' essay is significant in that it tries to account for the way in which media constitute a form of address and therefore the ways in which they simulate experience both to capture audience attention and constitute communities at the same time. Although community is an "artifact" arising out of practices and discourses formed outside of, and prior to, the sphere of media, in the following chapters, I will attempt to demonstrate how communities can be formed through aesthetic strategies staged by political groups in the media.

At this point, the utility of employing certain aspects of rhetoric and postmodern theories should be clear in regard to the thematization of the level of experience I have referred to as aesthetic. On the one hand, it is essential to recognize how changes in the domain of signifying practice lead both to a postmodern understanding

of its mechanics, so to speak, as well as to the necessity to adapt rhetorical strategies in the face of those changes in order to accomodate the need for legitimation at the level of institutions. The key aspect here is that the two levels are split off from each other in such a way that legitimation no longer appears through ideological exercises, but through symbolic/aesthetical forms of simulation. In light of that, a brief sketch of the role of the media as the vehicle for such simulations was put forward.

A number of things must obviously be outlined in greater detail. First is the conception of community, understood as constituted through forms of aesthetic identification; this will be developed in chapter four. As well, the role of aesthetic experience and the communicative function of the work of art in this process needs to be sketched out, and the link made between the governments' use of media and the formation of consensus through aesthetic strategies. This is the substance of chapter five. However, it is also essential to go back and establish some of the historical conditions upon which this reading can arise. As I pointed to in the introduction, it is necessary to restructure the understanding of aesthetics to make this reading. In order to do so, the following chapter will look into the processes leading to the privatization of aesthetic experience, and what conditions make it possible to restore an intersubjective understanding.

NOTES

1. This was the topic of debate during the "panel" discussion segment of the CBC's Sunday Report, March 13, 1988.

CHAPTER III

RELATIONS BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC: THE SOCIAL FORMATION OF AESTHETIC ATTITUDES

The next major task arising logically from the previous chapter is to begin to develop a concept of community which would fulfill the conditions of formation through non-ideological means. Before we can sketch out a concept of community from an aesthetic perspective, however, it is important to fill in the background upon which this might arise. In this chapter, I will inquire into the historical formation of privatized (aesthetic) experience, both to develop an understanding of the effects of "Kantian" aesthetics outlined in the introduction, as well as investigating some possible epistemological openings provided by poststructuralism that may be the starting point for the restoration of a collective (aesthetic) experience. This chapter will describe the aesthetic experience as one which appears as a product of overall, more or less simultaneous changes in the social. The level of subjective (aesthetic) experience will be seen to exist in a dialectical relationship to the public sphere, where one cannot be separated, except analytically perhaps, from the

other. Finally, we will investigate the relation between "high" and "low" culture to determine if the dissolution of the boundary between them might open up the possibility of the restoration of aesthetic experience as a component of the everyday.

Disposition and Disinterestedness

Much recent work in aesthetics, as I pointed out in the introduction, is concerned with understanding both the production and reception of artworks as constituted by social forces, as opposed to an art history understood as the cumulative linear history of stylistic effects which ignores the socio-economic background upon which particular works or genres appear.

One aspect of this is the institutional critique arising out of the avant-garde's attempt to sublate art into life praxis. The power of institutional formations to prevent this, demonstrated through the failure of the avant-garde project itself, attests to the strength the institutions have to locate the art object in a space separated off from the space of the quotidian and the social in general (Burger 1984). (This may be attributed as well to the break-up of the social generally into specialized subsystems [Habermas 1975]).

This is first and foremost a linguistic practice of nominalism. To call an object a work of art is to invoke that separation, chiefly defined in terms of the

distinction/opposition between utilitarian and non-utilitarian. To the bourgeois mentality, that which has no use-value and which does not enhance productivity is aesthetic, and thereby consigned to its proper place, defined by its proper name. Hidden behind this lack of use-value, as Bourdieu (1984) has pointed out, lie other crucial distinctions which act as markers of one's position in the social. The most obvious is the power to employ and uphold the process of naming itself. In this sense, the struggle over naming is the way in which goods are treated symbolically; a certain form of consumption marks the conversion of commodities into signs which act as indicators of class position. From another perspective, beyond the power to nominate is the ability to create the conditions to do so, which is a function of distanciation from the commodity's use-value in the utilitarian sense, and is the product of what Bourdieu calls 'cultural capital', the combination of wealth, education, occupation and family background.

What grows out of this is a certain disposition toward commodities (over)determined by this combination of factors. From a class perspective, the utilitarian/non-utilitarian distinction can be seen as an expression of a particular class fraction toward consumer goods which, as Bourdieu has done, can be demonstrated statistically across the entire range of consumption for a given class fraction. Thus the

concept of disposition contains, in effect, the social ground for the formation of taste, manifested in the relative distance from the utility of a given commodity.

The notion of distance is significant sociologically in the way it links up with the Kantian notion of disinterestedness. Beneath this notion, according to Bourdieu, is a hidden social relationship. Firstly, disinterestedness is the product of a certain disposition, marked primarily by the possession of time, which can be squandered in the contemplation of the object. Disinterestedness can be seen in the first instance to be the result of a certain economic condition which opens up the time to "reflect" on the object in a disinterested manner, ie. at a distance from its use-value. Bildung, the cultivation of the self, can only be undertaken at a second-remove, when one is free from the demands of the quotidian. Secondly, pure taste, the taste of reflection which appears only in the mode characterized as disinterestedness, is distinguished from the merely sensual. Ideal beauty is no longer the product of the real world, of the empirical, but is the product of culture. Culture, from this perspective, is the distanciation from desires, from nature itself viewed as a form of animality. Thus, pure taste is not only the means by which one enacts a social distinction between oneself and the vulgar, between the realm of culture and those closer to nature and thus unrefined, but is as well (and this is my point) a form of repression. "The negation

of enjoyment . . . the opposition between the tastes of nature and the tastes of freedom introduces a relationship which is that of the body to the soul, between those who are 'only natural' and those whose capacity to dominate their own biological nature affirms their legitimate claim to dominate social nature" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 491).

Through Kant then, pure taste, in the form of disinterested reflection manifested as a distanciation from the commodity, inaugurates the removal of the sensual from the domain of aesthetics. As Bourdieu states, this indicates the legitimating ground for the dominant class, taste being the medium, if you will, the signifier of the social distinction between the realm of the pure soul and the filth of the body. In my opinion, this presages the development in the 19th and 20th centuries of the institutional apparati of the museum and the art gallery as separate from the everyday of bourgeois life praxis. The social distinction embodied in individual subjects after Kant (most notably in the cult of genius) is simply converted into the institution as part of the overall process of bureaucratization of the life-world in the last one hundred or so years. Aesthetic experience was thus already cut off from the quotidian long before its embodiment in the art institution, its architectural manifestation being only the most visible sign of an already long-embedded set of social relations. The theoretical

elucidation of the concept of pure taste provides the basis for this separation. The denial of sensual gratification and the notion of purity implies the need for a separate space in which the aesthetic experience can occur, free from the taint of the spectacle of the mass, and the development of the art institution as a unique subsystem separated off from the social is grounded on the repression of the filth of the everyday.

Pure pleasure, in the transcendental mode, implies the triumph over the body and control over matter; freedom in other words. This freedom comes however at the cost of denial. The foundations of taste are built on the repression of the senses. It might be asked then whether or not the link between the art object and everyday life might be reinstituted through the recovery of the hidden material. It is possible that this might shed some light on the preoccupation of the post-modernists with the popular, with "excremental" culture, which perhaps signals the "return of the repressed". The deconstruction of the kind found in Jacques Derrida, for instance, especially his attack on the priviliging of sight and hearing in Western epistemology, points to attempts to widen the ground for aesthetic experience. The inclusion of other modes of sense experience such as orality and the olfactory indicate a return to aspects of knowledge which have been absent from both scientific and aesthetic discourses for some time. The most significant point is perhaps that it is a <u>return</u> rather

than anything particularly new. Derrida's work signifies the re-investigation of modes of experience which have been repressed, and which are effectively absent as a result of the purification of both the public and private space. Bourdieu's analysis of the social distinctions engendered by the codification of pure taste is certainly correct as far as it goes, but it must be seen against the backdrop of the genesis of personal and public concern for hygiene. The purification of taste goes hand in hand with the purification of the body and of the urban space.

The Foul and the Fragrant

The social history of odour itself provides an interesting case in which we can see this development take place. In this section, I will draw on the work of Alain Corbin (1986), who investigates the relationship between odour and the sanitization of the public and private spheres in France between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, out of which we can grasp the social nature of the development of "pure" taste.

According to Corbin, much of the scientific discussion in the eighteenth century centered around the identification of various odours and attempts to construct a classificatory scheme for them. Prior to the rise of chemistry through the work of Lavoisier and Pasteur (and the effect of what I think is the visual bias introduced by microscopy), attention was focussed on smell as a means of identifying

health hazard. The rise of osphresiology, the science of smells, and the number of medical texts devoted to odour indicates the increasing concern with the effects of odour as the source of disease. Increasing fear as to the possible harmful effects of the stench rising from the decay of animal matter and human corpses, along with the emanations from cesspools and urban swamps led to various attempts to sanitize the public space. This desire was complimented by the rise of capitalism, in the form of Utilitarianism, which bemoaned the wastage of both excrement and the abundant corpses of horses. In and of itself, the medical concern was not enough to provide the motivation for the sanitation of the public space. According to Corbin, the impulse came as the result of the combination of the desire for "salubriousness" and the potential profit to be obtained through the recovery of waste products, which were in fact converted into disinfectants used to deodorize the public space.

The rise of the bourgeois mentality was not only evident in making profit from excrement, but also appears in relation to health practices. In the late seventeenth century, excrement was considered to be therapeutic, thus its use in aromatics (such as ambergris, civet, and musk) was sanctioned as a means to correct the atmosphere surrounding the body, according to the prevailing theories of air. In the mid-eighteenth century, the harm attributed

to putrefaction led to a rethinking of the products of defecation. The excrement base of the aromatics was emphasized and the connection was made between the odours of musk and of those of excrement, now considered to be harmful. At the same time, there entered increasing moral concern about the possibilities of degenerate behaviour. The strong odours of the aromatics were linked to hysteria and addiction. More importantly, perfume itself symbolized waste, since its loss through evaporation meant that it could not be accumulated. Unlike excrement, it could not be recovered and thus constituted the "intolerable," the ultimate loss of the efforts of the bourgeois' labour: "Perfume, linked with softness, disorder, and a taste for pleasure, was the antithesis of work" (Corbin 1986, p. 69). From that perspective, it was entirely immoral, and thus "it was desirable that it lose its animal references and that its exciting allusions to the reproductive instinct disappear together with musk" (loc. cit.).

We begin to see then, toward the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the beginnings of the distanciation from pleasures connected to animality and the sex drive that were linked, in effect, to the excrement that formed the basis of odours toward which the population, especially the rising bourgeoisie, developed an increasing intolerance and disgust. At the same time, we can can read into this further, and posit the probability of an increasing distance between the bourgeoisie and the

aristocracy, focussed on the non-utilitarian (and consequently immoral) aspect of perfume as waste. It seems that in all likelihood it would be possible to apply Bourdieu's analysis retroactively to this period in regard to the moral controversy over perfume. The use of perfume clearly signifies the height of decadence since it is pure waste. In that sense, it also powerfully symbolizes a certain disposition toward commodities: the squandering of wealth on an activity which is purely aesthetical, i.e. which does not offer the possibility of generating surplus-value, and thus unethical to the bourgeois outlook (and possibly without meaning as well, in terms of a means-ends rationality that was developing).

Increasingly, the sensitivity to smell comes to act as a social marker. An increasing emphasis on the private space shifts the focus to the stench of the masses resulting from overcrowding in the dwellings of the poor. Social status is determined by the emanations of the individual; after the interdiction of the smell of excretia, an interest in body odour comes to the fore. The status of the individual is predicated on his or her sensitivity to odour, which is ultimately the possession of the bourgeois, since the loss of the sense of smell is the result of being steeped in foul odours, in the atmosphere of the workplace and home where the labourer spends his life. According to Corbin, the sensitivity to odour was considered to be

inversely proportional to the intensity of physical labour.

Thus the mass is already characterized at this point, undifferentiated as individuals due to their collective stench. The increasing distance between the levels of society becomes determined on the basis of the relative nearness to or distance from effluvia, classified according to the intensity of the smell of perspiration. The absence of odour indicated both one's status as distinct from the the putridity of the masses and the possession of the necessary sensitivity to odours to make fine distinctions, in terms not only of the broad distinction between classes, but also more importantly in having the ability to distinguish pleasant odours, an accomplishment unattainable by the lower class due to their reduced sense of smell as a consequence of the environment which they inhabit.

Increasingly, then, hygiene became the concern of the private, in terms of both control of the body and the domestic environment. The overall concern for the dwellings of the poor can be expressed as an economic imperative, the realization of the need to provide proper ventilation: the reduction of congestion promoted the good health of the worker. This had the effect of solving two problems with one solution: on the one hand, it guaranteed the health of what would soon be known as the labour pool, an absolute necessity given the expansion of industrial capitalism occuring during this period; on the other, it alleviated the concern with promiscuity, in which "the brotherhood of filth

fostered an atmosphere of animality" (Corbin, p. 153). The economic is thus tied directly to the moral; the separation of bodies through decongestion has a dual function. As Corbin points out, the sense of smell was the most effective means by which to measure the impact of ventilation on the dwelling. He also points out, however, the increasing importance that light begins to play, anticipating as he says "the great swing in attitudes that was to give uncontested supremacy to the visual" (p. 154). The increasing interest in the properties of light mark the decline of olfactory significance (light nonetheless linked in the same manner to both work and morality: its absence connoting animality and sexual immmorality as well as a reduced desire to work). I simply want to note at this juncture that shift, which I feel has wider implications epistemologically.

There are two other developments in the history of olfaction that concern us which relate to the privatization of aesthetic experience: the reconstruction of the physical space of the home, and of the self through the body. These are marked chiefly by the form of retreat, both in terms of physical separation and withdrawal into the internal experience of the self. The emphasis on private space was a consequence of the increasing intolerance toward the stench of the masses, resulting in the growing desire to retreat into the dwelling which constituted a sacred space free from

the taint of the poor. In turn, the interest in the private space reconstituted the home as a theoretical object. The concern here shifts from the emanations of the masses to the interaction of the emanations of the family as well as the various odours present in the domestic sphere. The flight from the town into the countryside or into the family dwelling was reworked into the division of the interior itself.

The fear of the intermingling of the family's emanations led to the creation of a separate space for the individual. What had begun as the separation into individual beds led eventually to the fashioning of the individual bedroom. As well, the demand for the separation of odours (the mixing of which was considered obscene and promiscuous) led to the restructuring of the home: the division into the kitchen, bedroom, bathroom. As Corbin notes, this separation freed the boudoir from organic odours and allowed for the development of an "aesthetic of olfaction" constructed around the projection of the individual through the scent of perfume. The demarcation of an intimate space certainly fostered the process of individualization occuring during this period. Significantly, this process was contingent on the deodorization of the bedroom; individuation was built on an absence. The separation of the various odours of the household created a deodorized atmosphere, which functioned as a kind of tabula rasa upon which could be written the

inner self: "Odours helped make the chamber the mirror of the soul. The skillfully delicate atmosphere of this refuge for secret tears and pleasures tended to replace the sensual animality of the alcove" (Corbin, p. 169-70).

We can see then that the "demarcation of the intimate spaces of interior monologue" instituted a certain kind of aesthetic experience predicated on the control of the environment. The desire for distanciation from the sensual and the sexual represented by fecal odour and perspiration is enacted symbolically by a series of retreats: in the first instance, by the retreat into the home as a defense against the stench of the mass; secondly by the retreat to the individual bed as a defense against the emanations of the family; and finally, the separation of various functions within the household itself, represented structurally by the architectural divisions implemented in the dwelling. It is this final effect that is perhaps the most significant. It is first of all possible to imagine that the fragmenting of the domestic sphere according to function is a reflection of increasing specialization brought about by the division of labour. This in turn can be seen to be figured, as I just mentioned, in architectural form. However, as we have noted, the bedroom possessed other functions than just that of sleep. It also becomes the scene for aesthetic experiences. What is marked by the separation of the various functions of the household are the 'present absences' in the

bedroom itself. Firstly, the repression of odours marks the general social division itself within the home. Secondly, and more importantly, this division marks the separation from the everyday. In effect, the retreat into the bedroom represents the denial of the quotidian in favour of a sacralized space as the scene of the aesthetic. Thus the division of the dwelling indicates the division of the various functions into their appropriate spaces, in which the bedroom becomes the locus of aesthetic experience. In line with previous arguments then, we can say that the internal divisions of the home are symbolic of the separation of the aesthetic experience from the everyday. As each function is consigned to a space, so too for the aesthetic. From this perspective, it requires little imagination to make the intuitive leap from the deodorized boudoir to the whitewashed walls of the modern museum. If the private space is the echo of the public, and vice versa, it is possible to view the institutionalization of the aesthetic experience within a particular architectural space separated off from the everyday as a homology of the functional divisions within the home.

Furthermore, not only the space itself is marked by this purification process, but the body as well. Along with the creation of a space for the aesthetic is a change in the experience itself arising from increasing distanciation from odours through control over bodily hygiene. Corbin indicates an important shift here, symbolized by the ritual

of the toilette, from a code of manners "primarily intended to avoid causing embarrassment to other people, toward a body of hygienic precepts that also aimed at narcissistic satisfaction" (p. 73). In precisely the same way as the boudoir, the body, through bathing, becomes the tabula rasa upon which the self can be constructed. Once again, the denial of the odour of the body is strongly linked to sexual repression. Corbin refers to Havelock Ellis, who notes that prior to the 18th century, women "did not use perfume to mask their odour but to emphasize it" (loc. cit.). However, following this period, the emphasis on hygiene becomes a considerable factor in the discrediting of the musk which was used to enhance the sexual odour.

The growing interest in more delicate vegetable scents which compensated for the interdiction against aromatics led both to a new sensitivity to odour and a redefinition of its significance. Detached from its therapeutic function, scent became a form of pleasure. However, this was not a shared pleasure (although it became increasingly fashionable to use perfumed accessories), but rather an inner experience of the soul. Although scent, as mentioned, became the projection of the 'I' through the perfuming of the boudoir, it also acted as the symbolic vehicle of access to the inner experience of the self. Here, in effect, is the final retreat from the mass into the interiority of the self. The retreat from the town to the countryside or into the home

finds its ultimate escape into the purely private experience of the 'I'.

We can see then that the successive retreats lead finally into the internal experience of the individual. This is certainly linked to the increasing privatization of experience generally. As Corbin suggests, it has to be written alongside the experience of defecation which also becomes the site for the inner monologue with the appearance of English water closets. The rise of narcissism was the result of the processes of individuation occuring on all fronts, symbolized by the increasing distance between public and private. The concentration on the inner affective experience brought about by the use of scent as the gateway to memory indicates a new type of aesthetic experience concerned with the recovery of the self. Reflection is thus turned inward toward the soul, away from the world, and the aesthetic experience henceforth no longer generates knowledge about the world. From now on, the aesthetic experience will be a solitary one.

Repression and Modernist Aesthetics

We engaged this reading of the history of smell in order to uncover some of the shifts which might account for Bourdieu's reading of more contemporary formations of taste culture. His analysis appears to be borne out by the increasing emphasis on purification and the increasing sense of intolerance and disgust expressed toward the sensual in

the quest for the soul. The formation of the private space was the practice of the elite, who clearly possessed the resources to effect those changes. That the first water closets in France were installed at Versailles, or that the practice of perfuming was performed by those with time for an interest in the ephemeral only tends to confirm Bourdieu's thesis. The lack of availability of running water in the first instance indicated the determining limit to the practice of private bodily hygiene amongst the population in general.

However, we are not so much concerned with the sociological insights to be gained from such an examination, except insofar as we are trying to get a sense of the conditions which give rise to a particular understanding of the social construction of the meaning of the work of art. As Gadamer suggested in Truth and Method, our insights into the meaning of aesthetic objects will always be mediated by what he termed prejudice. The concept of prejudice points to the historical formation which is the set of conjunctures constituting the present of the interpreter. Prejudice(s) can be defined as the epistemological grounds upon which the interpeter's practice is constructed. In effect, it is the operation of the Foucauldean episteme on the subject; the effect of the mediation of the horizon of language on a given subject at a given historical juncture. To an extent of course these actions of language cannot be rendered transparent in the present, thus they perform an ideological

function recognized only through hindsight.

My reason for foregrounding this concept is simply to indicate that the structure of prejudice as the product of a particular historical conjuncture mediates the way in which knowledge or meaning is generated. It is also the product of tradition, of a particular language-formation into which we are assimilated (in the three most commonly referred-to formulations: Gadamer's tradition; Wittgenstein's language game; Lacan's symbolic). From this perspective, the object is already pre-constituted in a particular way due to the social formation (as discursive). Thus in order to gain insight into both the experience of the object and the meaning derived from it, it is necessary to inquire into the structure of prejudice which constitutes the object in a certain way. Hence our inquiry into the history of olfaction.

Our investigation demonstrated in terms of changes in social praxis the structural encoding of a taste formation which had been worked out previously in theoretical terms by Kant. It is marked primarily by the increasing privatization of the experience of aesthetic objects. Even though what we have been describing is an experience that can be recognized as the production of an entire class fraction, and I have described it as such, the relations to the aesthetic object itself are no longer collective, no longer interpreted in relation to the community, but in

terms of the formation of the self, of Bildung, which is an entirely private affair. This is certainly evident in Kant, where the sensus communis is emptied of its moral-political content, and reduced to the ability to represent and communicate subjective experiences. It is thus emptied at the same time of any empirical content, of reference to the world, since it concerns only the interior affective products of the experience brought about by commerce with works of art and with the spirit.

This however, as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (1986) have demonstrated, is an "ideological manoeuver" of the dissociation of the body (and subject formation) from the social, when the body is actually the "priviliged operator for the transcoding of these other [textual; natural; social; etc.] areas" (p. 192). Thus the division between high and low at the level of the social, and the bifurcation of the body into distinctive regions above and below the waistline, cannot be analytically divided into discrete processes; they are synchronic and dialogic: "...the body cannot be thought separately from the social formation, symbolic topography and the constitution of the subject....Thinking the body is thinking social topography and vice versa" (loc. cit.). The internal formation of identity cannot be distinguished from the historical; the psychical is also the social.

As I mentioned at the beginning, and attempted to demonstrate through the discussion of olfaction, this form

of aesthetic experience, of pure pleasure, is founded on the principle of repression. Bourdieu characterizes this negation as the distinction drawn from Kant between civilization/culture (where civilization is the unrefined raw material for culture), but which can be just as easily defined by a series of homologies: excrement/perfume; body/spirit; slum/civic centre; anus/head; and so on. What is significant is that the second term is contingent on the negation of the first. The difference-structure implies the transcendence of the first term in a kind of Hegelian Aufhebung, and in which "elimination" takes on a whole new dimension. What I want to suggest is that this repression characterizes the modern aesthetic experience. That is a rather sweeping statement, but I think to some extent justified by the historical reading. This difference-structure is the (Gadamerian) prejudice which determines how the aesthetic object is spoken.

There is a clear narrowing of what becomes specifically named as the aesthetic experience as the result of the repression of the sensual. The sensuous is displaced onto the Other, either in the slum, or of foreign origin--". . . like that Iroquois Sachem, who was pleased in Paris by nothing more than the cook shops," whom Kant refers to in the Critique of Judgement--which negatively constructs, through exclusion, a "space of discourse" which is "de-libidinized in the interests of serious, productive and

rational discourse" (Stallybrass and White, p. 97). This is, at the same time, the discursive space of the Critique, the space of the bedroom, and the art gallery, all of which have been "emptied" to produce both the physical and discursive conditions upon which the pure, disinterested pleasure of the privatized aesthetic experience can be predicated. Thus the production of aesthetic experiences in this mode is the result of a vast labour of reconstruction in both the discursive and material/architectural fields.

What we have traced is the inter-relationship between the social-historical formation and the production of a certain form of subjective experience which we could characterize as modern. This is marked chiefly by the increased privacy of aesthetic experience and the formation of a circuit between the spirit and the work of art which is closed both to community experience and denied to the mass, who themselves are an effect of the class distinction implied in the "possession" of the mode of experience. It produced simultaneously a sacralized space for the artwork and a sacralization of the experience itself, almost a transference of the Protestant experience of God onto a secular space, a trans-coding of the religious experience into the experience of art in a move to re-sacralize an increasingly de-sacralized social space. I will leave it at almost, since that is a purely speculative statement. Nonetheless, it is important to note the disappearance of the public ritual into the realm of the private (similar to

the direct relationship with God). Implied in the same process is, as we have noted, a reduction in the epistemological aspects admitted to the discourse on both the object and the experience itself as a result of the interdiction of the sensuous as constituting valid knowledge (to an extent, I would submit in passing, due to its resistance to codification in the language of "science"). The discursive field is thus closed off as an increasing intolerance toward the disgusting produces discourses of distinction, manufactured on the division between the rarified world of mind and that of the defecating body, distinctions which deny the experience of the latter.

The distinctions which produce the philosophy of spirit also produce the discourses of the aesthetician, and the sanitization of the public sphere (in terms of the legal sanction against odour) is reproduced in intellectual discourse purged of references to the "low". As Stallybrass and White have noted, the increasing abstraction of the theoretical is a work of repression of the content of a given domain or object: "'rigorous theory' has tended to look down on 'mere content' as obvious, crude and vulgar, redeemable only through a process of abstraction and refinement" (p. 192). We can recognize here the process leading to formalist aesthetics which characterized more recent modernism, constructed on this labour of abstraction (both quite literally in terms of the production of works of

art themselves as the projection of the psychic experience of the artist in a highly schematized form, and in the cult of genius as the discourse on those productions worked out initially by Schelling [see Gadamer 1977, pp. 39-73], both of which contribute to the abstraction of both the production and reception of artworks from the quotidian.) As Stallybrass and White also go to some lengths to emphasize, the reconstruction of discourses cannot be thought through in isolation from an actual site of production. From this perspective, the increasing privatization of aesthetic experience cannot be thought separately from the formation of the space set aside for the production of that experience, the boudoir/studio and the museum. The increasing concern for the formal in both production (which may have been a result of the formalization of production in general: the invention of the paint tube dispensed with the need for assistants, thus leaving the artist alone in the studio with his/her work) and in the experience of the work of art relies not only on the discursive, but on the designation of a specific space in which such experiences can occur. The repression of content leading toward formalist aesthetics is bound together with the formalization of the site for both the production of the works themselves and the discourses which represent their reception.

The emphasis on the formal is, for our purposes, an indicator of the closing off of access to the contents of

the works as legitimate aspects of the aesthetic experience. This marks not only a de-politicization of artworks, but also indicates the separation of the artwork from the everyday, decreasing the possibility of the integration of the aesthetic experience into life praxis. As I have tried to sketch out in this section, the increased privatization of aesthetic experience is linked to a reduction of that experience in regard to its epistemological constituents. The interdiction against the inclusion of the sensuous, represented by the repression of the experience of the body, indicates the evacuation of a level of experience which negatively determines the space of the aesthetic. The de-contextualized realm of the experience of the self in commerce with works of art dramatizes the desire to transcend the filth of the everyday; however, the negation of that experience through repression and sublimation also sets the stage for its re-appearance. The reappraisal of the content of these symptomatic forms is what I will characterize as the post-modern.

The Return of the Repressed: Toward Postmodern Aesthetics

> . . . the grotesque tends to operate as a critique of dominant ideology which has already set the terms, designating what is high and low. It is indeed on of the most powerful ruses of the dominant to pretend that critique can only exist in the language of 'reason', 'pure knowledge' and 'seriousness'. . . . the logic of the grotesque, of excess, of the lower bodily stratum . . . could unsettle 'given' social positions and interrogate the rules of inclusion, exclusion and domination which structured the social ensemble.
>
> Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression

> Effluvium generally designates decomposing organic substances, or rather their product floating in air, that kind of gas hanging over marshes for awhile, and a kind of magnetic fluid also. So the text is a gas; for the origin and the stake [enjeu] of the word, one hesitates, but this comes back to the same thing, between spirit (Geest, Geist) and fermentation (gaschen).
> . . . And to read it, the text must be sniffed out.
>
> Jacques Derrida, Glas

I want to conclude by returning to the hypothesis made at the beginning of this paper in which I characterized the post-modern as the "return of the repressed". It is hopefully clear at this juncture what that might mean, in terms of the preceding analysis of the formation of aesthetic experience which I submitted as being that of modernism. From this position, we might begin to describe the post-modern as the reopening of avenues closed by the formation of the subject of modern aesthetic experience, in effect to revise epistemology in such a way as to legitimate certain modes of experience jettisoned in the sanitization process; an ideological counter-move to re-integrate the low into the intellectual discursive domain.

The key terms in this manoeuver are contamination, decomposition and putrefaction, which describe the re-inscription of themes "rescued" if you will from the low. Implied in this are two moves: one is the reclaimation of territory, of what Feyerabend (1978) called a "continent of knowledge," which is the return to the popular itself, notable in such ideas as E.P. Thompson's "history from

below," the redesignation of the popular as culture; the other is the revision of the symptomatic contents of high culture, a re-reading of the psychoanalytic text itself which reveals the repressed material operating behind the back of Freud, mediating the formation of key concepts in the analytical field. This second move (which I will not dwell on) is the substance of the latter half of Stallybrass and White's text, who attempt to demonstrate the distortions in interpretation arising out of the social conditions based on the kind of repression we have discussed throughout this essay. In both cases, the key terms function to pollute the discourses of the absolute spirit, offering, as the two quotes at the head of this section suggest, both a critique which dislodges the position of pure knowledge and a way of reading (and reconstructing) the cultural text through the operations of the key terms.

By way of demonstrating the re-opening of aesthetic inquiry on this terrain, I will offer two examples: Jacques Derrida's Glas and Joseph Beuys' Fat Corner. The first provides an an example of textual operations in which the key terms can be employed to dismantle the elisions of the 'Hegelian' discourse through contamination. In simpler terms, Glas opens the field of the aesthetic to the dejection (in both senses) as a strategic intervention in deconstructing the "pure", thus giving us a model of how aesthetic criticism can reincorporate affective experience. Beuys' Fat Corner, on the other hand, provides the concrete

example of the thematization of the key terms in the art work itself, thus opening the aesthetic experience to the avenues closed off through the retreat into formalism. The Fat Corner is unique in that it addresses both formalist aesthetics and the sensuous simultaneously.

I will not perform an analysis of Glas, since I think it takes care of that within the terms of its own presentation. What is most significant for us is its double structure, the intersection of the two columns of text. The placement of the "rhetoric of flowers" alongside the philosophical column does not act as a simple binarism, in which one would be the "underside" so to speak of the other; rather it is a contamination of one by the other. It is the odour of excrement and perfume which invades/pervades the philosophical, in effect mounting an attack on its seeming self-referentiality. The stench of decomposition distracts the reader and undermines the "purity" of the philosophical text, and acts as resistance to the processes of abstraction being operated on the subject of philosophical discourse, reanchoring the reader in the affective via the symbolic evocation odour produces. This effect dislodges reference and meaning as a fixed relation. As Dan Sperber (1975) has shown, the classification of smells is metonymic; there is no semantic field of smells. They cannot be recalled, but they can be easily recognized. Their recognition is always linked to the evocation of memory, thus smell "only holds

the attention in order to re-orient it toward what surrounds it" (p. 117). What is interesting is the displacement that occurs here: ". . . in trying to identify a smell, one may revive memories that are more captivating than the smell itself, more insistent than the original desire one had to identify it" (p. 122). Thus, they produce metonymic chains which lead further from the reference and destabilize the meaning of a given text, since the mnemonic function of odour produces an entirely different set of relations than that of the signifier/signified, generating through the senses a completely new set of associations that can be brought to bear on a text.

Gregory Ulmer (1985) has fastened onto these aspects of Sperber's discussion of symbolism and shown their significance in relation to Derrida's work (where he provides a more detailed treatment than I offer here). Ulmer also points to the importance of the chemical senses and the way they operate "to dissolve, the act of dissolution, hence the transformation of the object . . . The dissolving action of the chemical senses, involving the breakdown and transformation of substances, offers a model for a methodology of decomposition by means of which the limits of theoretical philosophy might be transgressed" (p. 57). Thus, decomposition becomes the priviliged term for the iterability of writing, which continues to function in the "absence of its context" and which can be grafted onto the sorts of metonymic chains produced by the evocative

power of odour (bear in mind that decomposition is not registered by sight, but by smell), which not only defers the meaning of a text, but sets up a series of associations through memory which offer themselves as alternate approaches to the text, and in which the "text must be sniffed out."

It is not my intention to embark on an investigation into Derrida's work here, but rather to simply suggest through this thumbnail sketch how he offers us an example of operating through other circuits; as Ulmer puts it: "He approaches here the Swiftian insight that proposes as an alternative to the metaphysical voice-ear circuit the equally auto-affective circuit of the anus-nose" (p. 56). There are obvious problems since Derrida refuses to account for extra-textual forces, which I have maintained as necessary to the understanding of psychic content, and I have implicitly suggested that the social is not wholly discursive. Nonetheless, it proposes an opening of the field onto the domain of the repressed, revalorizing the modes of experience interdicted through both social and psychic division, and in that sense characterizes the widening of the epistemological field to include the "circuits" displaced into the unconscious of the bourgeois experience through the socialization processes described in the preceding sections. The notion of contamination, whether metaphorical or "real", marks a reinvestment in the

banished content of the "low", and in that way provides us with the marker of the shift from the mode of experience I have named modern to that of the postmodern. The deconstruction of pure discourse is one instance of this refocussing of attention. In terms of an aesthetics of reception, it points toward the effacement of the distinction between art and the lifeworld, undoing the separation between the pole of disgust and the beautiful by reinserting the excessive body into the middle. The effect is the exposure of the structure (stricture in Derrida's vocabulary, highly suitable given its anal connotations) which normally excludes the other. The function of the senses here is the way in which they open up, through the symbolic evocation, another realm of experience which operates as a heuristic, a "truth" of the aesthetic experience which is not epistemic (that is, it is doxa, not episteme) but penetrates it; in other words, doxa and episteme are not analytically separate in this model, but interpenetrate (see Ulmer 1985, pp. 96-97).

The similarity between Beuys' work and Derrida is the basis of Ulmer's book, and he provides an extensive discussion of the relations between the two. Of interest to us is the way in which the Fat Corner provides another instance of a way of working against epistemological reduction, but unlike Derrida, not in employing the key terms to operate on other objects, rather, in the production of the artwork itself, where the material itself takes the

place of the signifier. Decomposition and putrefaction are foregrounded through the material, the fat, which is packed into a corner and left to itself, where, as Ulmer describes it "the material is left to putrefy, to spread and absorb whatever is in the air, and to be absorbed in turn by the walls and floor--the figure of decompositional disgust" (p. 242). This differs sharply from the description of the "classical" statue which Stallybrass and White contrast with the grotesque body:

> . . . the classical statue was always mounted on a plinth which meant that it was elevated, static and monumental. . . . the classical statue is the radiant centre of a transcendental individualism, 'put on a pedestal', raised above the viewer and the commonality an anticipating passive admiration from below. . . . The classical statue has no openings or orifices whereas grotesque costume and masks emphasize the gaping mouth, the protuberant belly and buttocks, the feet and the genitals. . . . The grotesque body is . . . never closed off from either its social or ecosystemic context. The classical body on the other hand keeps its distance. (pp. 21-22)

Despite the fact that they remain within a language of mimesis, the description still functions as an insight into the two different kinds of production we have been underlining. In this way, the classical is transcoded within high modernism into formalist concerns; the production of distance is still very powerful. Beuys would thus be identified with the grotesque. The key phrase here is "social or ecosystemic context," which for Beuys is the central concern for the entire ensemble of his works, and is operative for the Fat Corner itself, where the material

(lard, margarine) is associated with its insulating properties and is also one of the most common cooking materials in the home. Hence, the choice of fat grounds the sculpture in a system of circulation outside of the normal context of aesthetic production. That the material is "common" offers, on the one hand, a decoding of the preciousness embodied in the conventional materials of sculpture which act to reinforce the scarcity of artistic genius, and on the other, links the production of sculpture with other circuits, other chains of experience anchored in the quotidian. The material itself provides the axis upon which the aesthetic experience can be penetrated by the everyday.

The act of penetration is exquisitely symbolized by the Fat Corner. One of its most significant attributes is its odour, which, as Beuys says "infiltrates" the institution, and permeates everything. The fat not only seeps into the walls and floor, but also invades the atmosphere with its smell. In this the Fat Corner functions less as a sculpture and more as a pointer; this is what Ulmer (following Derrida) calls its "double inscription." At one level, Fat Corner is what it is: a sculpture. In terms of its form, it offers itself to conceptual knowledge: its shape as a tetrahedron denotes rational, analytic knowledge. At another level, it has no reference, it does not represent anything, but rather points beyond itself, where the reference is supplied by the viewer responding to the

object. This works, as we noted earlier, most clearly in the case of smell, which evokes the response of the receiver. Thus, the Fat Corner is something and at the same time doesn't represent anything; this is how the double inscription works:

> In terms of the double inscription, then, Beuys's objects are both what they are (their qualities motivate the concepts attached to them) and stimulation for the general processes of memory and imagination. At the primary level, the object does not "transfer a message" but moves the spectator--remaining open in its reference, the object evokes associated memories that are motivated less by the qualities of the object than by the subject of reception: the theme of a work like Fat Corner . . . is not immanent in the material and is not accessible by means of interpretation but only through its appeal to the observer's associative memory. (Ulmer 1985, p. 251)

The Fat Corner opens up through the spectator a series of relations, the metonymic chains we spoke of earlier, beyond the "metaphysical voice-ear circuit" of an autonomous aesthetic, and toward a reintegration of life praxis into commerce with artworks and vice versa, through both the material of the sculpture itself and the experiences it evokes by sensory stimuli. This is done largely at the expense of traditional notions of what the art object is; in terms of Stallybrass and White's language, it is the substitution of the grotesque for the classical. The use of fat inverts the order by replacing the scarce material of sculpture with a common household commodity. The classical distance is broken by the affective operation performed by the fat through olfactory stimulus. In that sense, it is

not self contained, "without orifices," in the way it opens up to recombinations with experience rooted in the life-world. "Fat Corner is not an 'aesthetic' object nor an 'art' object in the traditional sense. Beuys did not come to art by the usual route of craft or skill at producing 'beautiful' objects, but because of 'epistemological considerations'" (Ulmer, p. 242). This is precisely what I wanted to characterize as the postmodern, that which reconstructs the aesthetic from an epistemic point of view, relocating art within the space of knowledge, from which it had been banished by Kant. Both Beuys and Derrida offer, through the processes of contamination and decomposition, examples of the ways in which that might be accomplished, by returning to other modes of experience repressed in the process of the purification of the aesthetic field.

A Stake in the Popular

I have attempted to show here an alternate means of understanding aesthetic strategies as being trans-codings of changes being carried out in the social and the psychical in general. What I have tried to demonstrate is the way in which aesthetic experiences must be reconstructed within the context of the historical juncture which produces that experience on the basis of the interrelationship between the material site and the discursive and between the social and the psychical, all of which work together to fashion the public and the private together, marking class division and

experiential division simultaneously, thus creating the conditions upon which the aesthetic will be elaborated. Of major significance will be the determination of the shift in desire, which constitutes, amongst both intellectuals and artists, a major shift in the direction of the gaze, toward the "popular." I have in no way tried here to account for what might be responsible for that shift, concentrating on a sketch of what I think it is, thus the major gap is a hypothesis accounting for change. At the same time, thought will have to go into whether such things as "history from below" are in fact what they say they are, or whether it is "history from below from above," in which case, the idea of change would simply be an ideological mask for the same operations of "high" culture on the low in the maintainance of the "norms" of social division.

It is, however, this stake in the popular which is at the center of the remaining chapters. In order to retrieve the potential of the aesthetic as a useful category, it is essential to reconstitute the link between commerce with works of art and the rest of the lifeworld. This can be accomplished by dissolving the boundary between the high and the low, which is possible in the first instance through the recognition of its historical constructedness as outlined in this chapter. The major task here is the overcoming of the (Gadamerian) prejudice that differentiates between works of art and the mass media, and which precludes aesthetic

analysis of the media on the basis of its ideological impurity, its interestedness.

The immediately preceding section sought to stake out a territory on which the return to certain categories of experience could be articulated through the widening of epistemological categories to include that which had been "repressed" through the modernist drive toward purification. Unfortunately, there is inadaquate space here to fully explore the ramifications of a thematization of the "organic" senses as a possible site for this recovery. The relationship between high and low culture, however, is of major significance in what follows. Against the backdrop of this chapter, I want to characterize the investigation into community, the work of art, and aesthetic experience in chapters four and five, precisely in terms of a strategic return to the low. Primarily, what that means is the discarding of the notion of distance between the work of art and the quotidian, the disruption of the notion of disinterest. Before we can begin to grasp the relation between political power and aesthetic practices at the level of signification, we must restore the idea of aesthetic experience in which interests emerge.

CHAPTER IV

THE AESTHETIC BASIS OF COMMUNITY

I want to return and pick up the thread from chapter two. In order to begin to understand the notion of community as an "artifact" that is produced through discourses beyond, but including, those of the media, it is necessary to go both back into history and further into contemporary analyses. The recovery of aesthetics as the proper basis for the formation of communities requires both a re-reading of the historical change in the conception of aesthetics and aesthetic experience, and a re-reading of recent formulations of collectivity in light of that change. The reasons for this are fairly straightforward: firstly, in order to meet the objection that aesthetic experience is wholly subjective and that focussing on that level is unproductive in regard to an understanding of community, it is necessary to realize that this position, as I have shown, is historically determined and open to scrutiny; secondly, if as I have argued, the aesthetic becomes the terrain on which communities are currently formed, we cannot proceed beyond this simple formulation until the less stable

category of (collective) aesthetic experience is returned to epistemology. The extent to which this latter is possible rests, I believe, in some of the notions brought forward in recent poststructuralist work that has attempted a recovery of modes of understanding that developments since the Enlightenment have laboured to repress.

Thus, to obtain a possible position from which to articulate the status of political communication in the current context requires a rather long and elaborate digression through both historical and theoretical terrain. The need to address the historical text is derived in large part from the realization that much of what the most neo-avant-garde theoretical formulations are claiming as new is in fact constitutive of a return to some older conceptions which have been erased by modernism, and thus the historical register offers both substantiation for current claims, and a more concrete understanding of how precisely the notion of "artifact" works against the grain of the new, resisting the (theoretical) totalization which is the presumed effect of the media. Although I can only offer a brief sketch here, in this section I will look at Gadamer's attempts at historical reconstruction, primarily from the perspective of the sensus communis and his objections to Kant, and the way his reformulation of the relation between aesthetics and community through certain traditions can offer us some insight into possible reconstructions of our own. As well, from a modified postmodernist perspective, I will examine

Lawrence Grossberg's formulation of the "affective apparatus" both in relation to the discussion of the historical conceptions of aesthetic experience and some other more recent perspectives, as well as a possible heuristic in relation to main theme of the aestheticization of political practices.

Practical and Theoretical Knowledge

At the beginning of Truth and Method, Gadamer (1975) discusses a series of humanistic concepts in relation to the formation of taste, to find the basis for the "tact" which Hermann Helmholtz found necessary for the human sciences (pp. 7-10 passim). In order to find the ground for the human sciences, Gadamer suggests that it is to be found, not in any methodological distinction (as in Helmholtz' Kantian distinction between natural and practical laws), but in the heritage of humanism. To recover that tradition, Gadamer turns to the relation between these concepts and the subjectivization of aesthetic experience that occurs in Kant and the subsequent historical rise of the cult of genius and 'aesthetic consciousness'. What can be drawn immediately from this discussion is the mourning on Gadamer's part for the loss of moral content and relation to community that concepts of taste possessed prior to Kant. This is most evident in the discussion of sensus communis, where Gadamer reaches back to Aristotle and to the division between phronesis and sophia, practical and theoretical knowledge.

He refers to Vico, whose defense of the rhetorical tradition indicates the limits of modern science: the direction of humanity does not lie in abstract reason, but in the concrete community. Thus Vico defends the Aristotelean distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge: phronesis contains a moral element, it is the wisdom that directs the will toward the "right" thing, which is "acquired through living in the community and is determined by its structures and aims" (p. 22).

This leads us to an altogether different ground for truth in the human sciences, once the distinction between the two types of knowledge is made. Historical knowledge is not theoretical knowledge, it is based in the circumstances of the community, not on universals; thus, "it exists in its own right because human passions cannot be governed by the universal prescriptions of reason" (p. 23). Rational proof does not exhaust the sphere of knowledge. The problem for Gadamer is the loss of this tradition, since reflection on the human sciences in the 19th century did not take place within the moral tradition of philosophy (Vico, Shaftesbury), but under the influence of Kant and Goethe, where the sensus communis is taken over without its moral content. For Gadamer, this results in the loss of its critical significance; understood as the theoretical faculty of judging, the function of sensus communis in relation to society and state is emptied by the intellectualizing of the

idea during the German enlightenment (p. 29).

This "moral content" which emerges in the examination of Vico is carried over into an examination of the concepts of judgment and of taste. The humanist tradition represented by Vico and Shaftesbury is contrasted with that of Kant; the sensus communis is seen to be more than an intellectual faculty, in that it already contains a sum of judgements and criteria that constitute its contents, and thus is not merely aesthetical (p. 31). Under these conditions, taste is linked to the "common sense" and thus to community. For Kant, however, the dimension of moral "feeling" disappears; the apriori of practical reason excludes the empirical and consequently the sensus communis. For Gadamer on the other hand, since morality and manners are never given as a whole, judgement is necessary to make correct evaluations in concrete instances, which contribute to the development of the law. The evaluation of an individual case is not simply the application of the law, but actually co-determines it.

Without going further into the detail of the argument, suffice it to say that Gadamer finds that there is a failure to recognize the ideal normative element in the concept of taste, chiefly due to Kant's separation of aesthetics and ethics. Limiting the idea of taste to judgement of the beautiful banished the "more general experimental concept of taste and the activity of aesthetic judgement in the area law and morality from the centre of philosophy" (p. 38).

This is extremely significant for Gadamer, since this cuts the human sciences off from their source of self-understanding, Kant's transcendentalism making it impossible to acknowledge the truth claim of tradition. As a result, the radical subjectivisation of the basis of aesthetics cuts off any knowledge of the object; the discrediting of theoretical knowledge except for that of the natural sciences forces the human sciences to depend on the methodology of the natural sciences. The question that Gadamer wishes to ask is whether it is appropriate to restrict the question of truth to conceptual knowledge.

The Truth of Art

Since we have already dealt with the discussion of subjectivisation of aesthetics and the cult of genius in the preceding chapter, we can move ahead into Gadamer's critique. For Gadamer, the truth has to be recovered from the extremes of aesthetic consciousness. The first moment is the rejection of formalism as pure perception, since seeing implies differentiation--understanding--and it is that which leads us to recognizing something as a work of art. Thus, the unity of the aesthetic object cannot be solely in its form, but is also the result of entering into a "relation with what is meaningful," i.e. its content. For Kant, this unity was guaranteed by the concept of genius through which art is grounded (which, as Gadamer's previous discussion demonstrates, was elevated to the universal basis

of aesthetics).

That we view this as a form of "false romanticism" today does not indicate the disappearance of this principle, but rather points to its shift onto the role of the observer. The observer who recognizes the perfection of a work of art demonstrates genius in understanding. This however, is complicated by the fact that art has no use-value as such, and its existence as a work of art derives from what we would today call reception-aesthetics. This, however, is intolerable for Gadamer, since it implies a type of relativism, what he calls an "untenable hermeneutic nihilism" (p. 85). Thus, the transfer of genius to the observer provides no solution either.

What he finally argues is that art is not a presence which "offers itself to pure aesthetic consciousness" but is rather a mode of self-understanding which is related to the historical reality of humanity: "inasmuch as we encounter the work of art in the world and a world in the individual work of art . . . we learn to understand ourselves in it, and that means we preserve the discontinuity of the experience in the continuity of our existence" (p. 86). Thus the experience of the work of art is a form of knowledge, over against Kant's radical subjectivization of the aesthetic. Against Kant, Gadamer looks to Hegel where

> the truth that lies in every artistic experience is recognized and at the same time mediated by historical consciousness. . . . aesthetics becomes . . . a history of truth, as it is seen in the mirror of art. It is

> also a fundamental recognition of the task that I formulated of justifying the knowledge of truth in the experience of art itself. (p. 87)

Thus Gadamer seeks to assert the experience of art as harbouring a truth content, but one which is distinct from that of scientific knowledge. The truth in art (neutralized in aesthetic consciousness) opens the way to the mode of understanding in the human sciences, since the work of art "includes understanding, and thus represents itself as a hermeneutical phenomenon--but not at all in the sense of a scientific method" (p. 90).

Gadamer then outlines a concept of play which is the mode of being of a work of art. This is very similar to recent understandings of the text as unattached to any subjectivity (as in intentionality), but which at the same time, as in reader-response theory for instance, requires an audience to be activated. Play becomes then for Gadamer a structure, which is detached from the representing activity of the player. The significance of this "transformation into structure" is that the player disappears, and we ask only what is meant by the play itself. The structure is not simply the transition to the closed world of play, but that which "rests within itself," which is beyond the real: it is the transformation into the true. The structure, in effect, is superior in that it takes reality in its unordered state and gives it unity and thus meaning. The truth emerges in the experience of the work of art to the "extent [that] one knows and recognises something and oneself" (p. 102).

Thus, mimesis takes on the form of a revelation: through linkage with anamnesis, one recognises the true, what is. For Gadamer, this is an essential point, since imitation, as representation, gives us knowledge, which loses its force following Kant, hence the need to return to the old model. To re-present is not to copy, but to reproduce the structure in which the spectator recognises essence:

> As a counter to this subjectivist attitude of modern aesthetics I developed the concept of play as the artistic event proper. This approach has now proved its value, in that the picture--and with it the whole of art that is not dependent on reproduction--is an ontological event and hence cannot be properly understood as the object of aesthetic consciousness, but rather is to be grasped in its ontological structure when one starts from such phenomena as that of representation. . . . The quality of being an original is thus not limited to the 'copying' function of the picture . . . The quality of being an original, rather, is an element that is founded in the representative character of art. . . . The picture contains an indissoluble connection with its world. (pp. 126-127)

The major problem for Gadamer, and the motivation for his discussion, is that the ground for the human sciences in the "truth" of tradition is unavailable in the 19th century. As a result (which I think is still in effect today), the human sciences were forced to ground themselves on the model of the natural science methodology, which is entirely unsuitable, given that historical phenomena do not follow law-like patterns. The source of the problem is (for Gadamer) to be found in Kant, whose attempts to justify the subjective universality of aesthetic taste no longer produce

knowledge of the object (the text, the painting), but a form of aesthetic consciousness dependent on a concept of genius as the basis of its autonomy which ultimately removes the possibility of the connection between works of art and the life-world. Against this, Gadamer turns to the seventeenth century, and suggests that taste is not the ground, but rather the perfection of judgement, and thus reconnects aesthetics with ethics over Kant's limiting the idea of taste to a special area of the principle of judgement.

The Sensus Communis Recovered

For the sake of space, I have moved rather quickly over what is a complicated and difficult argument, and want simply to draw out a few points relative to the sketch I have presented. The first is that Gadamer is concerned less with community proper than with the goal of grounding the human sciences in hermeneutics. Thus, the text speaks of taste less in terms of the specific critique of Kant (although that is central to the argument), than in terms of developing an epistemological base for the human sciences that does not depend on rational proof for its "truth." What is most important for us is the way in which aesthetics, in contradistinction to Kant, is regrounded in the community, in praxis, and to that extent is shared experience. By grounding it in such a way, it is possible to widen what is understood to be knowledge to include experience which is not amenable to rational proof, but is

rather part of the cultural "store" which includes memory, anamnesis, as well as phronesis as a form of practical knowledge, which is grounded in a concrete community.

Secondly, the discussion of the artwork provides a counter-argument against formalism which allows for a number of useful insights. Two points that Gadamer brings up provide ways to link his work with more current projects. On the one hand, he suggests that the text or work of art has its own being, and is unauthored. This corresponds well with both structuralist and poststructuralist notions of the text as 'free-floating' and unattached to any author's intention. For Gadamer, this is working toward the notion of tradition as self-standing (selbstandig) which also fits well with current conceptions of the text (although in Gadamer this has a tendency toward the hypostatization of tradition). On the other hand, at the end of the sections I have described, Gadamer widens the notion of the work of art beyond the canon (as designated through what is constituted as such through genius and "aesthetic consciousness") to include all texts, which presages the notions of textuality as ontology (if I might put it that way) expressed by Derrida through the maxim "il n'y a pas hors de texte" (with the pun on "pas" as both "step" and "not" marking the similarity to Gadamer's notion of the horizon of language).

Perhaps the most interesting point is that the artwork gives us knowledge through its representative aspect,

through a modified definition of mimesis. Interestingly, Gadamer reclaims a value for representation by moving beyond the original/copy problematic and suggesting that to re-present is the mode of being of the work of art. With this as the starting point, it is possible to view the work of art as "original" in terms of its representative success, that is, the extent to which it brings forth the real through its ordering of a chaotic world. In this sense, it is meaningful, it brings us knowledge of ourselves in that "one knows and recognizes something and oneself." This is, in effect, the symbolic function of the work of art which disappears in Kant's schema. This is probably not meaningful in the way Gadamer suggests, since symbolic recognition does not work through the restoration of the signified. Nonetheless, his construction does point to the way the symbolic function works to create connections (metonymically) through memory with the life-world (Sperber 1975, pp. 115-123 passim). This moment of recognition is important, and suggests a way to gain insight into the operation of political communication at the aesthetic level in terms of the way it simulates experience and produces the symbolic self-recognition with that simulation. The assumption of a referent on Gadamer's part need not militate against his argument; in fact, it probably works better without one. The loss of the referent (and the signified) in a sense perfects the operation of simulation by opening the entire cultural store as a field of signifiers to be

reworked in infinite combinations, and at the same time provides the gap into which nostalgia can be inserted on the basis of that loss, the lost referent standing in for the real.[1]

The third point I wanted to bring out is in terms of epistemology and the limits modern science places on it. Importantly, Gadamer suggests that reason has limits and that arguments on the basis of universals do not account for the moral and historical existence of humanity. This is the counter-argument to Kant's notion of the universal claim to the judgement of taste. Gadamer in effect reverses this process, where instead of a subjective judgement extending the "ought" universally, the ought is determined collectively and then applied to specific circumstances, where the sensus communis is the experience brought to bear on the case at hand (although, similar to Kant, without concepts; through examples). In other words (which I think is similar to more current research: Bourdieu, eg.), taste is socially determined, through the concrete community, not through abstract reason, nor through genius. Thus, it is not founded ex nihilo through the subjective apprehension of the beautiful, but in the "common sense". As Gadamer suggests, the link between aesthetics and ethics needs to be maintained since, contrary to Kant, it can be seen through tradition that they both have their basis in the community, not in the categorical imperative as applied by a monad. As

I wanted to argue at the outset, community here is determined through aesthetical means, and offers a way to understand community in just such a way in order to then get a sense of how it might be constituted through aesthetic strategies in relation to the current political scene. This I think can be linked to postmodernism in a provocative way through the notions Gadamer takes from Vico regarding the idea that rational proof does not exhaust the sphere of knowledge. This implies, first, the acceptance of the limits to rationality, and second, the admission that aesthetic experience is valid epistemologically and is a source of knowledge of the social unavailable to science. On the one hand, this works for Gadamer as the grounding of the human sciences, and on the other, is important to us in terms of the limits to rationality for making 'sense' of the political from our current position and offers aesthetic experience as a viable category from which to launch an analysis.

Community and the "Affective Alliance"

With these aspects of Gadamer in mind, I want to turn to Lawrence Grossberg and his discussion of affect. Sited within the context of postmodernist positions, Grossberg argues for a need to discuss "feeling" or "mood" as one of the major features characterizing the postmodern everyday, but one which does not appear in formal textual practices, and thus cannot be found through encoding or decoding models

(such as ideology critique). As Grossberg remarks "there is no reason to assume that it is necessarily and primarily operating within either a signifying or representational economy" (1987b, p. 9). In the first instance, it is difficult to sketch out what this "economy" might look like, since its description is dispersed across a number of Grossberg's texts. From that perspective, it is less coherent perhaps than Gadamer, but similar in enough ways to warrant comparison. What I want to suggest ultimately is that the formation of community through "affective alliance" in Grossberg's construction finds a close correspondence to Gadamer's historical reconstruction of the basis of community through the sensus communis of shared aesthetic experience. Both posit a connection between the reception of aesthetic objects and the everyday (the artwork/text for Gadamer; rock and roll/postmodern text for Grossberg) in which the quotidian and its contradictions are revealed through recognition. For Grossberg, this also reveals the possibility of empowerment, in the form of resistance produced by the affective restructuring of the everyday lives of "fans." I will look first at the notions of affect in relation to Grossberg's texts on rock and roll, which offer a model of what I will call community, and then afterwards briefly discuss Grossberg's relation to Gadamer and the importance of intervention of postmodernist theory.

In prefacing his arguments for the necessity of positing affect as a central feature of the experience of

rock and roll, Grossberg iterates the need to modify postmodern theory in a strikingly similar fashion to the comments made earlier in this essay. On the one hand, he notes the need to construct an interpretation of the everyday which can account for "changes in contemporary life at a level other than ideologically constituted existence" (1984b, pp. 110-111). On the other, he points to the necessity of curbing the excess of postmodernist and cultural studies claims by arguing "against both the formalism of postmodern theory which renders the audience inactive in the face of a hyper-(active) textuality, and the culturalist's inability to theorize the determining role of the text, operating at a level other than that of messages and their interpretations" (p. 100). Significantly, in relation to postmodernism, he makes the same distinction between what I referred to as an asynchronicity between social praxis and institutional structure, which he refers to as "the post-modernist's trap of describing both cultural practices and social reality in the same terms" (pp. 100-101). It is clear from the outset that Grossberg wishes to retain the insights that postmodern theory provides, but at the same time maintain the possibility of power and of resistance. Over against the pessimism engendered by the collapsing of the real in theoretical terms, Grossberg opts for an active audience in which empowerment is still a possibility, but which appears at another level beyond

signifying practices.

To begin, Grossberg claims that the affective experience is produced through two major determinants: a particular social and historical site, and what he calls (in more or less Foucauldean terms) an apparatus. It is the apparatus which effects the transformations in the "affective geography" of the fan's lives. Although the rock and roll apparatus may be somewhat problematic in the way it tends to reproduce a mainstream/margin dialectic, it is most interesting in the way it reproduces everyday social conflicts (especially the production of difference) within its boundaries.[2] In one of his texts, Grossberg describes the apparatus as follows:

> An apparatus brings together musical texts and practices, economic relations, images (of performers and fans), social relations, aesthetic conventions, styles of language, movement, appearance and dance, media practices, ideological commitments and sometimes, media representations of the apparatus itself. It is not merely a set of codes or resources that a particular audience brings to a text, as if the audience could be described through sociological sampling procedures. Rather, the audience is defined by its place within the apparatus. Further, there is never one rock and roll apparatus. It is the complex array of overlapping, and sometimes antagonistic, apparatuses that constitutes rock and roll and defines the limits of its effects. The same musical text will often be located in different apparatuses, each of which articulates it differently. (1984b, p. 101)

It is within this apparatus that the possibility for certain forms of resistance appear. Despite the apparatus' constitution of the discourses of rock and roll within economic relations and ideological struggles, it is also characterized by gaps into which the apparatus

"inserts . . . sites of affective empowerment which can provide strategies of resistance, evasion and even counter-control" (loc cit.). As Grossberg points out, the disposability of the commodity form (the record) places it in the hands of the consumer, who can create his/her own text out of it (by ignoring certain cuts, doing tape remixes, etc.). There is, nonetheless, no guarantee of resistance, but the culture provides the resources which might be appropriated within an apparatus in order to affectively transform what Grossberg calls "the hegemony of pessimism" through "transcending the same [of the commodity] by reproducing difference" (pp. 102-103). Empowerment, from this perspective, is the "energy" produced through forms of affective investment, which is not simply a form of pleasure (which is ultimately linked to some kind of ideological recognition), but that which allows for the restructuring of the relationships in the quotidian as a kind of survival strategy in the face of an overpowering ideological pessimism. The production of difference is precisely the way the apparatus functions to "cathect" its boundaries within the social that define its otherness inside the social itself, as a sort of internal exile.

There are two main strategies by which the apparatus works to empower the fan: encapsulation and excorporation. In encapsulation, a given rock and roll apparatus works to construct identity in terms of what it takes to be its own

history and geneology, limiting what is allowed into it. Boundaries are also "embodied in the fan's judgements," that is, the determination of what is not rock and roll and therefore excluded from the category. This, as Grossberg points out, is subject to dispute depending on the criteria used to determine exclusion, and therefore the position of particular (musical) texts within or outside of dominant culture will be a product of its affective empowerment for a particular fan, and not necessarily any economic or musical considerations which can be defined outside of the specific context of the fan's judgement. The assumption is that what is expropriated is inaccessible to those outside the apparatus, and thus they are unable to participate in its empowering effects, which then marks difference. The process of encapsulation, then, works to inflect the music in a certain way which "encapsulates its fans within its own spaces," and thus "gives the fan a priviliged possession of the music, and a priviliged access to its empowerment" (1984b, p. 103). This is performed however, not on the basis of any particular positive identity, but rather through the production of difference, through, as Grossberg says, what you don't listen to.

The second practice performed by the apparatus is excorporation, which works to "locate and produce" the boundary. It does so by appropriating signs from outside its boundaries and relocating them within the apparatus and at the same time investing them with "new ideological and

affective inflections" (1984b, p. 104). In doing so, it makes the normal into the other, and reproduces the same as different. It appropriates the signs of the marginal for the normal, and expropriates the the signs of the normal and turns them into the other. Here, both mainstream and margin are reproduced within the rock apparatus, but are stripped of their signifieds and reversed. At the same time, the process of incorporation works to transform the negative "into the positive side of difference and pleasure" in which the material conditions of the fan's lifeworld ("repetition, noise, anonymity, etc.") are turned into "occasions for pleasure" (p. 105). In effect, the conditions which produce the pessimism and tragedy of the lifeworld of consumer capitalism are reworked into forms of affirmation and pleasure, which then constitute their empowering effect, in which the everyday is transmuted through the affective empowerment brought about by the reversal accomplished through excorporation. For Grossberg, this reversal is the "expression of the apparatus' functioning as a transference mechanism" (loc. cit.). This occurs due to the fact that the apparatus reproduces the structures of the quotidian within itself, and thus it not only sites itself in relation to its "outside" which is the "hegemonic reality" within which it is located, but reproduces the social conflicts and contradictions of the everyday which appear as pleasure through this transference, when the "deconstruction of the

dichotomy between reality and fantasy, power and pleasure" transforms the oppressive structures in such a way as to offer strategies for negotiating control over those "real" problems (loc. cit.).

What is most significant then, is the production or "cathexis" as Grossberg call it, of the boundary which inscribes difference. There is no inside and outside however, since the rock and roll apparatus works to "locate its fans as different even while they exist within hegemony." Thus the social space of rock and roll "defines an exteriority for itself inside the dominant culture" (1984a, p. 235). In effect, there is, through the production of this difference, a process of community formation, what Grossberg refers to as an "affective alliance." The central aspect here is the advent of postmodernity, which for Grossberg is less a representation of a certain form of experience than a practice in which affective alliances are produced (p. 230). He suggests that the formation of community and identity through the rock and roll apparatus is produced through the tension of the confrontation of rock and roll with the postmodern. Against the "despair" of postmodernism, rock and roll attempts the refusal of its condition, and does so both through the transformation of its context (the transference) and the construction of identity in the face of the absence of meaning. Thus for Grossberg, the community of rock and roll is a formation which produces the affective alliance as a

strategy for survival in the postmodern context. Its politics is precisely the refusal of politics, where it "rejects that which is outside of its self-encapsulation not on political grounds but because their organizations of affect are no longer appropriate in the postmodern world" (p. 236). Community is thus no longer formed along ideological lines, but rather through affect.

As Grossberg suggests, community becomes problematic in relation to rock and roll as a mass commodity. According to Grossberg, the notion of a shared experience through the geographical proximity of a given locale (the face-to-face interaction) must give way to temporality as the dominant feature characterizing the rock and roll audience (1984a, p. 253). Youth as a category is determined temporally, both in terms of age and within Grossberg's historical positioning of the rock and roll audience in relation to the conditions of postmodernity. It is this tempo (which includes the velocity of production of commodities for consumption) which requires the dissemination of music within the economic structures of mass production. The recognition of rock and roll as a capitalist commodity does not however signal cooptation, that is, its availability does not predetermine its audience. The idea of community thus still remains viable if, as Grossberg suggests, cooptation is not viewed as a transition from a "folk art" into the economic relations of commodity production, but rather as a form of

"decathexis" of the boundary between the apparatus and the rest of the social. Since the record is always already a capitalist commodity, cooptation is the result of its positioning by the rock and roll apparatus itself, in effect its expulsion, when it no longer produces the affective difference:

> Cooptation indicates an affective re-alliance of the music rather than an alteration of the aesthetic or ideological constitution of the text. . . . Coopted rock and roll is music which no longer potently inscribes its difference and the difference of its fans. . . . Rather than a cycle of authentic and coopted music, rock and roll exists as a fractured unity within which differences of authenticity and cooptation are defined in the construction of affective alliances and networks of affiliation. (1984a, pp. 254-255)

We see then that the kind of community formed on the basis of affect is similar to that of Gadamer's formulation in that both are formed around the pole of taste. The affective alliance is the type of political community that Gadamer constructs when he "deconstructs" the line separating aesthetical experience and moral identity. The function of the apparatus in transforming the structures of the everyday, which Grossberg characterizes as unpleasurable, into possibilities for pleasure, is similar to the reproductive aspects of the artwork as outlined by Gadamer. Both rock and roll and the artwork reproduce the world in such a way that reveals, in Gadamer's term, the truth. The affective alliance is a community in that it is a formation which is constituted on a shared experience brought about by the way particular forms of music produce

that experience aesthetically, in which the real is brought forward through the reproductive nature of the work of art. Here, the recognition of the commodity form of the record corresponds to Gadamer's argument regarding authenticity: it is irrelevant to engage in a dispute over the original and the copy, since the structure of the work of art is not dependent on any mimetic relation to the world, but rather in the way it orders the "chaos" of the world in certain way to reveal the true, through anamnesis. What is important is the experience which it engenders through its representing, which in both Gadamer and Grossberg is identical: it is the way aesthetic experience offers insight into the lifeworld. Thus the fan makes certain judgements on the basis of the feeling engendered by the music, the music thereby constituting a form of community. The extent to which it is a community rests, I suggest, on the apparatus itself, which is more than just music as Grossberg describes it, including a whole set of discourses constitutive of a certain lifestyle. Most significant, and that which marks the difference between these two authors, is the intervention of postmodernism. The extent to which Grossberg's arguments carry more weight in this discussion rests on the acknowledgement of the absence of meaning. I suggested in regard to Gadamer that the loss of meaning was the next stage, in which the symbolic function of recognition worked in the gap produced by this absence to create nostalgia. As

Grossberg described, this is precisely what rock and roll does, through the production of identities and transformation of context (into fictional trans-world configurations) in which the simulation of experiences stand in for the loss of authenticity in the surrounding life-world. At the same time, they all operate on the surface, through an appropriation of style or structures of taste which offer the possibility of mobility, but one which is confined to difference, where there is no identity, no agency working behind them.

Thus, we have the beginning of the possibility to describe community formation both in terms other than the face-to-face situation and through processes that are not dependent on meaning in order to constitute a community. In beginning this section with Gadamer, I sought to demonstrate that the return to earlier historical configurations offered the usefulness of providing a means whereby community could be conceptualized at the level of aesthetics. Gadamer's arguments provide both an understanding of the shifting relations between conceptions of the aesthetic and the formation of subjectivity as an historical construction, and also the possibility of recovering insights from pre-Kantian aesthetics as connected with and constitutive of communities. Taste here is a social phenomenon of the first order, distinct from private preference, and as shared judgements, transcend the narrowness of particular interests (especially in the face of absolutism). However, these

insights clearly cannot be taken over tel quel in relation to the current historical conjuncture. The value of Grossberg's model is foregrounded here, in terms of the way it configures a notion of community that is first, not dependent on meaning (at least in terms of signifying practice, which is not to say that it is not meaningful to the particular community), and secondly, is responsive to the historical conjuncture, primarily expressed through its rejection of essentialism, still prevalent in Gadamer's more humanist approach. Possibly most useful in this context is that Grossberg places certain limits on the postmodernist position by arguing for an active audience. The affective alliance leaves room for the possibility of action, if only to ameliorate temporarily the oppressive conditions of the lifeworld, and is thus constitutive of a peculiar form of politics, albeit one which appears to reject altogether the idea of political action. I would argue however, that the affective alliance is actually the displacement of conventionally understood politics collected around particular ideological axes onto structures of taste, where ideological recognition is replaced by forms of aesthetic judgement. From that perspective, it can be empowering, but it also can be subject to power. Taste, as Bourdieu (1984) has effectively demonstrated, is a social construction, and one which is determined by groups competing for power over the social. There is thus the distinct possibility, which

this essay is trying to argue, that Grossberg's notion of empowerment can be turned on its head, if the political strategy is displaced onto the level of the aesthetic and attempts to engender the kinds of affective experience which characterizes rock and roll, through the simulation of experience toward the maintainance of hegemonic relations.

The Political and the Aesthetic

The assumption on Grossberg's part is that hegemony works on identity, and thus the strategy of resistance operates through the rejection of depth in favour of the bricolage play with signifiers. The flaw in this is that it assumes that hegemony is confined to ideology and "depth" models to do its work. As I suggested at the outset, it is possible to conceive of a political practice which would operate at the level of the aesthetic to constitute communities in such a way as to win the consensus required to maintain control over the legislative apparatus. The dark side of Grossberg's formulation is this distinct possibility. I have tried to sketch out what a community 'interpellated' through aesthetic strategies might look like. It is clear, both through the historical register and in terms of postmodernist readings of social praxis, that the formation of communities along aesthetic lines is indeed a possibility, and that it is also possible to begin to provide a theoretical account of how that might work.

The difficulty that arises in making sense of the

political through conventional discursive modes of interpretation dependent on coherent ideological platforms can I think be overcome by moving to the level of the aesthetic. An historical reconstruction of the shifting relations between the private and public spheres I described in the last chapter demonstrates the increasing formalization of aesthetics which effectively cuts off any possibility of a connection with the social in general. The theoretical work of Kant's third critique presages social change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries where, due to the privatization of experience, the use of aesthetical categories was precluded, except at the level of the individual subject. To an extent, the move to Gadamer was prompted by this understanding, since he offers a reconstruction which brings the aesthetic back into the center of social experience. This is indeed the first move that is required. Aesthetics as it is understood in a formalist/modernist sense (which is still in effect) clearly cannot be employed in regard to an understanding of the political or the social; hence the need to return to the historical register in order to see that formalism itself is historically constructed and therefore open to renegotiation as to its relation to the social.

At the theoretical level, I would argue that some of postmodernism provides the moment of intervention where that might be accomplished. The levelling of the canon of texts, and the opening onto the popular through the collapse of the

distinction between private and public offer what I characterized as a "return of the repressed" in which postmodernism (and poststructuralism) find themselves unwittingly recuperating theoretical positions contained in pre-Kantian aesthetics and applying them to the current historical juncture. The work of modernism has been to isolate aesthetic experience within an autonomous psychic apparatus constructed on the discourse of the monadic subject. Formulations such as Grossberg's however, work to restore aesthetic experience to the social collective, and describe the formation of communities in much the same terms as Gadamer discovers in Vico and Shaftesbury. As I noted in the introduction, these positions run the risk of reproducing precisely that tradition which Gadamer has reconstructed. My argument for rhetoric is situated here, in terms of the way it can work together with postmodernist positions to provide an account of the political communication which has a theory of aesthetics at its disposal.

Various theoretical formulations can be brought together to substantiate the claim that it is possible to address the formation of communities on aesthetic grounds. The hypothesis concerning another level of effect is borne out through the examination of pre-Kantian and postmodernist positions. It is thus essential that this level be more comprehensively examined to determine its effects in the

political domain. If, as I have suggested, politics shifts to this level in reaction to the increasing disappearance of meaning, then the simulation of experience through aesthetic strategies is of paramount importance regarding the securing of legitimate access to power. The ways in which power functions will remain unspecified as long as this other level remains unthematized. The loss of meaning does not imply the disappearance of power, as if it were only an effect of meaning. As Grossberg (1987a) has noted, the fact that the social may lack meaning does not necessarily entail its disappearance altogether. In other words, a "discursive asynchronicity" prevails, wherein power still works through discursive (and coercive) structures that remain despite changes in signifying practices. The extent to which we can understand their operations consists in discovering how political communication seeks accomodation with signifying practices that have more to do with aesthetics than ideologies, and how that works to constitute positions on that level in the interests of maintaining the hegemonic formation.

NOTES

1. "When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and sings of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where object and substance have disappeared," writes Jean Baudrillard (1983, p. 12).

2. I am indebted to Will Straw for bringing this point to my attention.

CHAPTER V

SETTING AN EXAMPLE
AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AND NORMATIVE CONDUCT

> Laicis autem oportet quasi ad oculum et sensibilitatum omnia demonstrare simplice enim melius iducuntur repraesentationibus quam rationibus
>
> (It is, moreover, fitting to present all things to laymen as if to the eyes and other senses, for the commons are better swayed by representations than reasons)
>
> -Jacob de Vitry, Sermones in Epistolas

> Quia cui verba satis non faciunt, solent exempla suadere
>
> (Since him to whom words are not enough, they are accustomed to persuade with examples)
>
> -Ambrose

Having sketched out the idea of a community constituted through a form of aesthetic 'interpellation', we must turn to an investigation of the processes which would operate to produce these formations. In this chapter, I want to focus on aesthetic experience and its relation to conduct in the lifeworld. In order to begin to address the notion of a political rhetorical strategy, we still need to sketch out how aesthetic experience can produce the conditions under which consensus can be obtained. The bulk of this chapter

will be devoted to an examination of the work of Hans Robert Jauss and his concept of aesthetic identification, and his discussion of the effects of aesthetic experience on the lifeworld. This work will be read up against Grossberg, so that we might once again note the similarities between a hermeneutical/rhetorical approach and Grossberg's more postmodernist position, and gain insights into the utility of using them together.[1]

As I suggested in the last chapter, political communication shifts to an aesthetic strategy to compensate for the decreasing effectiveness of ideological interpellation. This transformation is not simply the increased penetration of the ideological hegemony of the state into the private sphere, but also marks the movement away from rational discursive logic, toward the production of simulacra of practices through aesthetic strategies. Thus, the ground shifts to forms of aesthetical identification, rather than good reasons, and thus it is no longer a matter of discursive validity claims, but a matter of taste, and taste does not find its ground in concepts, but in examples. If Kant's analogy indeed holds true, that the aesthetic is analogous to the moral, then it is all the more appropriate that as governments seek to secure consensus for norms of conduct that are not amenable to technical compromise, they turn to the media. In order to sufficiently understand how consensus might be obtained

through aesthetic means, it is necessary to re-establish the central function of aesthetic experience in the promulgation of social norms; that is, to recover the communicative function of art. Secondly, the realm of art, normally held up as the only remaining sphere free from alienation, must be seen as the site in which normative claims are increasingly being contested. Here an account must be made of the effects of reception, of the work of art as a form of communicative action, rather than simply art as the sphere of unalienated labour. Thirdly, the formation of a collective aesthetic experience as the basis of a community or group structure through role playing (both a dramatic and a social science category) needs to be examined with regard to the accomplishments of social actors (the domain of subcultural analysis). If identity is increasingly in the form of a retreat from the quotidian which lacks subjective meaning onto the surface of style-practice, or any other form of group behaviour, the assumption is, as in Grossberg, that this escapes hegemony, which requires ideology and "depth" models to do its work. However, if consensus can be understood not to be collected around particular ideological axes, but rather onto structures of taste or aesthetic experiences where ideological recognition is replaced by aesthetic identification, then it is plausible to suggest that the operations of power can also appear within aesthetical practices.

In order to attempt to substantiate the hypothesis that

governments increasingly legitimate their right to govern through and on aesthetical grounds, I want to explore the theoretical discussion of aesthetic experience, primarily in terms of what Hans Robert Jauss refers to as modalities of identification (Jauss 1982; see appendix). Jauss' arguments will be taken up in relation to Lawrence Grossberg's "affective alliance" formations, both to identify the presuppositions that underlie Grossberg's concept of the work of art (in this case, rock music) and its social function, and to underscore the normative aspects which characterize group formation produced by the intersubjective experience of the music.

As I demonstrated in the last chapter, it is possible to conceive of community formation on the basis of aesthetics. This is amply demonstrated in Grossberg (despite his claim of inauthenticity, where he links community to a nostalgic notion of folk culture; Grossberg 1984a, p. 253), in which the processes of "encapsulation" contained in the fan's judgements work to determine the geneology and history of rock, and "excorporation" reproduces the boundaries of the community within the social as a whole by expropriating the signs of surrounding culture and inverting their meaning (Grossberg 1984b, pp. 101-105). The affective alliance, as I have argued, is a form of political community despite Grossberg's claim to the contrary (1984a, p. 236). The process of excorporation,

described as the conversion of the unpleasure of the postmodern everyday into possibilities for pleasure and survival, is constitutive of a praxis based on a shared aesthetic experience brought about by particular forms of music in which the real is both brought forward and transformed through the work of art, in which it both transmutes and offers insight into the lifeworld. Here the recovery of shared experience is foregrounded against the backdrop of the fragmentation of the subject characteristic of the postmodern experience. It is only the separation of aesthetics and politics characteristic of modernist epistemology that prevents Grossberg from recognizing that the level of affect, which he defines as apolitical over against the ideological as the site of hegemony, is also political, in that even if the actions of the affective alliance (action remains a distinct possibility for Grossberg, "against . . . the formalism of postmodern theory which renders the audience inactive;" 1984b, p. 100) function only to alleviate temporarily the oppressive conditions of the lifeworld, this is constitutive of a form of politics, albeit one which appears to reject altogether the idea of political action. The loss of authenticity implied by the absence of meaning in the quotidian, which instigates the retreat toward aesthetic practices (the cathexis of boundaries of difference in Grossberg's terms), is the gap in which rock music works to produce identities and transform the context into fictional transworld

configurations in which the simulation of experiences stands in for the loss of authenticity in the surrounding lifeworld. Community is thus formed negatively, in terms of the production of difference, which marks the internal exile of the fan within the larger social context, but also positively through the possibilities of pleasure created by the nostalgia for a lost referent and the positing, through the artwork, of an imaginary future of to-be-instituted norms. It is the intersubjective experience produced through the music which offers the possibility of a negatively-defined space of social accomplishment as well as a positive group identity which can negotiate the present with the possibility of a recovery of an ideal past, or a utopic future; thus, community praxis is engendered through forms of aesthetic identification.

Once it is understood that (political) communities can be formed on aesthetic grounds (and thus posit another level of "textual" effect beyond ideological mis-recognition), it is then necessary to inquire into how both works of art might function to alter dispositions and work to reflect or critique social norms, as well as into the reception of those works, and the ways in which shared experience engendered by the reception of artworks can lead to either reinforcement of norms of conduct or to their alteration.

To ask what is the function of art can be a risky business. As Francis Sparshott has shown, this will largely

depend on the kinds of assumptions one makes about the function of art, and is therefore seemingly tautological at the outset (Sparshott 1982; esp. pp. 99-101). Thus the place to begin is not with the attempt to posit a function for art at the outset, but rather to uncover the assumptions which underlie a particular conception of that function, which can be read off a text or texts. Grossberg, I would suggest, provides a rather peculiar mix of past and present, which both limits the function of art in what I will call a modernist sense, and at the same time overcomes that limitation through the emphasis on the social relations engendered through the experience of the artwork.

The Concept of Play

Everyone, including Grossberg, works within the modernist legacy of conceptions of the work of art, which we can trace back to the Kantian division between nature, art and freedom. As reinterpreted through the romantics and the cult of genius, art becomes increasingly autonomous, at one level in terms of the break-up of the social into various subsystems carried out under the division of labour, at another in the separation of the experience of art from the quotidian initiated by Kant and perfected by the romantic's idealist refusal of the experience of the everyday. Art thus becomes the realm of play, cut off from the expanding bourgeois social sphere (i.e. the sphere of commerce). As Sparshott puts it, describing the romantic line:

> Some theorists have urged that art fulfills this [recreative] function in an unusually intensive way by providing a moral holiday, a detachment from all moral, social, and economic concerns in which these serious matters are made the object of a spiritual game. In playing that game we recover our mental freedom and return more effectively and more humanly to the workaday world. (1982, p. 64)

We can begin to see here how play functions, primarily on the assumption that "humane" values disappear in the face of the ever-expanding bourgeoisie, only to reappear in the sphere of art, to which it is necessary to retreat in order to fill-up, as it were, on those missing values and then return to the quotidian. This notion of the sequestering of humane values in the sphere of art in reaction to the instrumentalization of the lifeworld is a theme that can be traced from the romantics through Marx, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas (just to name a few), up to and including Grossberg. This is clearly evident in the construction of the affective alliance as a strategy for survival in what Grossberg characterizes as the postmodern condition, as well as carrying the possibility of critique which runs through the authors cited (Grossberg 1984a, p. 233; 1984b, p. 102-3). The major distinction here is that, unlike the leftist critiques represented by those authors, Grossberg situates the possibility for critique within the popular culture of rock music, as opposed to strong distinction (as in Adorno) between an instrumentalized sphere of mass commodity production and an isolated realm of high art production, free from commodification and consequently from alienation.

The danger, which I think Grossberg avoids, is that the slippage into the non-identity brought forward by Adorno risks, on the one hand, the collapsing of the subject into the work itself where the closed circuit between monadlike work and subject preempts dialogic interaction (Jauss 1982, p. 20), and on the other, the collapse of the communicative function of the artwork onto the suspicion of affirmation of ruling interests (Ibid., p. 30). As Wlad Godzich points out in his introduction to Jauss' book, "Adorno's insistence on the radical and never subsumable individuality of each subject prevented any solution to what appears to be a monadic existence for the individual" (p. xvii). This leads us to two contrasting notions of play brought out by Jauss: the first, inherited from Marx, is that the sphere of play (the spirit in which artworks are made) is "an activity for its own sake and thus becomes determinative of artistic production," and by being for its own sake, is constitutive of a realm free from alienation (p. 54); the second brought out by Jauss (drawn from Aristotle) refers to the space of leisure as the opposite of unfree work (loc. cit.).

The first, as Jauss notes, is a product of German idealism and simply undergoes a materialist inversion in Marx. Here the notion of art for art's sake of Aestheticism comes to the foreground, where play is its own end, and the aesthetics of genius marks the triumph of the solitude of aesthetic pleasure. For Marx, this becomes a distinction between two types of production, where the sphere of art

stands in as the last refuge of unalienated labour. Adorno follows in his footsteps. As Jauss puts it: "Adorno is the heir to a tradition in the philosophy of art that withdrew to the ontology of the aesthetic object and that tended to abandon the question concerning the practice of aesthetic experience" (p. 21). This materialist version also finds its way into Grossberg, in terms of the "immanent historicity" which works of art embody, in which their purposelessness is the condition under which they accurately reflect the social sphere from which they are disengaged, and thus serve as immanent critique. In terms of the possible functions of mimetic art, Sparshott (1982) suggests that "imitations that lack obvious utility serve the concealed purpose of bringing to light one or another sort of concealed reality or hidden tendency, enabling us to envision clearly what otherwise we only half suspect" (p. 100). Here he is referring (in rather disparaging terms, I might add) to Lukacs' notion of realism that reflects the historical reality of the lived, to which we might also add art's critical function as in Adorno and Marcuse. That rock music transposes the quotidian into itself, where "it turns the material basis of such experiences (repetition, noise, anonymity, etc.) into the occasion for pleasure," indicates Grossberg's usage of this conception of the function of art (1984b, p. 105). Rock music thus reflects the reality within which it is produced.

However, having said that, we can also venture to say that Grossberg manages to avoid the pitfalls of these positions by restoring the centrality of the communicative function of the artwork. Over against the negativity of the artwork that, in Adorno's terms, "measures" the "gulf between praxis and happiness" (Jauss 1982, p. 21), Grossberg relocates the site of aesthetic experience away from the sphere of production of artworks themselves, by replacing the inquiry into the ontology of the art object with an analysis of its effects on the audience (although I should add that both production practices and audience practices are inserted into what he calls an "apparatus." For a definition, see Grossberg 1984b, p. 101). Within the transformation effected by the music, Grossberg insists on the audience as both heterogenous and active, in which the apparatus is not simply the site of the circular processes of production and consumption, but is embodied by and entails the judgements of the fans (1984b, p. 103). The audience is not simply interpellated into a particular apparatus, but is rather constitutive of it through the affiliations produced by a shared response to particular forms of musics.

Jauss contrasts the idea of play as another form of labour with a definition retrieved from Aristotle which distinguishes between work and leisure. Jauss brings out the difference between facere in Marx, understood as making, which comes to replace facere as communicative action, drawn

from Vico (Jauss, p. 54). In order to institute a sphere of production free from alienation, the communicative aspect of the work of art is distorted. Against this, Jauss refers to a notion of leisure, drawn from Aristotle, where the opposite of unfree work is understood as a space for the "contemplative attitude" (p. 54). Here it is not a question of contrasting different kinds of work, but rather a mode of reflection and receptiveness, the "condition of theorea [that] had constituted the opposite of unfree work or the making of something in the Aristotelian tradition of praxis" (loc. cit.). Play in this sense is not simply a mode of production, but also the engagement with the work in the mode of reception; where the scene of play is not only the production of those works, but also attention to their meanings, to what they say to us, and further, toward the communicative aspects of the work where social norms can be thematized and tested in a realm free from quotidian concerns.

In large part, the restoration of this attitude of play requires the revivification of the rhetorical position toward aesthetics, in which pleasure does not yet possess the negative connotations given by Kant and subsequent authors, and where the theoretical and aesthetic attitudes are not yet differentiated. Grossberg, for instance, contrasts pleasure and affect, where "pleasure itself is a phenomenological category already implicated within the

space of ideology, if not hegemony," and thus carries the negative form of affirmation of existing conditions. Hidden beneath this is the implication that pleasure is a form of inaction, corresponding in effect to escapism, the suspect operations of the mass media (Grossberg 1984b, p. 101). Thus Grossberg offers affect to replace pleasure to overcome the negativity which accompanies the invocation of the term pleasure.

As Jauss points out, however, this is a product of contemporary linguistic practice, where pleasure is "opposed to work and also differentiated from cognition and action":

> Pleasure and work do indeed constitute an opposition which has been part of the concept of aesthetic experience since antiquity. To the extent that aesthetic pleasure frees oneself from the practical compulsion of work and the natural needs of the everyday world, it grounds a social function which has characterized aesthetic experience from the very beginning. (Jauss 1982, p. 30)

As he goes on to point out, this does not characterize a form of withdrawal, but rather indicates a different mode of cognition distinguished from scientific knowledge:

> But aesthetic experience has not always been the opposite of cognition and action. . . . The cognitive efficacy of aesthetic pleasure Goethe's Faust plays off against abstract conceptual knowledge did not become a dead issue until the nineteenth century, as art became progressively autonomous. And to the older, preautonomous art which conveys social norms of action in multiple ways, the communicative function was still perfectly natural even though today it is often mindlessly suspected of affirming ruling interests, misunderstood as the mere transfiguration of existing conditions, and rigorously rejected. (loc. cit)

Here the split between work and play is brought to its extreme. Sparshott, for his part, rejects the idea of play

altogether, since it implies a lack of seriousness which undermines the value art has within a culture. Adorno, pushing Kant to the extreme, takes the uselessness of art as the condition under which it avoids instrumental interestedness, where mere pleasure in the object is the sign of fashion and hence subsumption under the logic of commodity exchange. Against the extreme poles of negativity and affirmation, Jauss introduces the concept of identification predicated on Kant's idea of intersubjectivity (that is, the capacity to communicate experience) which overcomes the radical individuality of Adorno. As Godzich puts it, "Jauss replaces the negation/affirmation polarity of Adorno by stressing that the negativity of the work of art is mediated by identification" (Jauss 1982, p. xvii).

In terms of the concept of play, the appeal by Jauss to the rhetorical tradition is a key move to overcome the negative aspect that the notion of aesthetic pleasure has accrued. The division between theoretical and aesthetical attitudes, which appears after Kant, has two major effects. Firstly, it consigns knowledge to empirical truth, and cuts off access to experience as a source of knowledge. This was Gadamer's argument in Truth and Method, where the rhetorical tradition provides the ground for the methodology that rests outside of propositional logic and depends rather on truth embodied in the textual tradition. Jauss takes this a step

further, suggesting that the work of art can be the space in which social norms can be contested, and tradition critiqued. In any case, it is the communicative aspect of the work of art that is lost within the aesthetics of genius, where the intersubjective aspect of experience, the sensus communis disappears in the face of non-identity. Here the pleasure derived from the work takes on its negative cast, where any notion of sharing of experience is ruled out by Adorno, since identity implies submission to ruling ideology. However, if the aesthetic and theoretical aspect of the sensus communis can be rejoined under the communicative function of art, then the experience of identification (and of pleasure) can be reappropriated as a positive practice, in terms of the alternative conception of play brought out by Jauss, wherein the space of leisure provides the moment where the work of art can be experienced and reflected upon and where its cognitive aspects are restored, thus constituting a form of knowledge grounded in the sensus communis (logica probabilium as opposed to logica veritatis [Jauss, p. 25]) and its relation to action restored through processes of role identification based on collective experience. Otherwise, as Jauss comments, aesthetic pleasure,

> now shorn of its cognitive and communicative efficacy . . . appears either as the sentimental or utopian opposite of alienation . . . or, in contemporary aesthetic theory, as the essence of an attitude that is considered philistine when adopted toward classical art and simply excluded vis-a-vis modern art. (p. 26)

Identity and Disinterestedness

Before elaborating on the processes of identification with the work of art, I want to return to Grossberg as well as retrace some of the argument up to this point. Firstly, I introduced the notion of play as the mode of aesthetic activity. As Jauss points out, this is not simply a modern phenomenon, but stretches back to antiquity, where the opposition between work and pleasure grounds the social function of art in freeing one from the demands of the quotidian. Under modernism, however, play is reduced to one function, which is the idea of play for its own sake (and its corollary, art for art's sake), and thus the distinction between work and play becomes the differentiation between types of production, alienated and non-alienated labour. Arising out of the subjectivization of aesthetic experience in Kant's third critique and the subsequent formations of the aesthetics of genius (of which Adorno is the extreme result) is the abandoning of the sensus communis in favour of a "self satisfying subject" coinciding with the increasing differentiation between the social and the individual, leading ultimately to the disparagement of pleasure as the reification of existing conditions. In the extreme of non-identity, the subject is defined (along with the artwork) in terms of the principle of negativity in which collective expression is cut off in the face of a fully instrumentalized lifeworld. The sphere of art thus becomes the last refuge of freedom, in which artworks become

the repository of humane values banished from the bourgeois sphere of commerce. The aesthetic is transferred from the subject into the immanent historicity of the work of art, and thus to the ontological inquiry into the status of the work of art, to which we can only bear witness.

Against this, Jauss proposes another aspect of play, in which play is contrasted with work, not as a distinction between different kinds of labour, but between work and leisure. Leisure here represents the non-working space of play characterized by contemplation and reflection, rather than ~~simply~~ another form of (non-alienated) work. Thus, the aesthetic attitude is neither the controlling gaze of the romantic genius, who aestheticizes and demands that others do the same, nor the retreat from the quotidian, but rather the reflection on experience. Reaching back to the rhetorical tradition, Jauss notes that the aesthetic and the theoretical are undifferentiated, and thus the artwork has a cognitive aspect in the way it brings knowledge of the world forward and at the same time offers the space of play in which social norms can be contested. Thus play has another side beyond production in reception. Here, the restoration of the communicative aspect of the work of art lost through modernism's refusal to thematize experience acknowledges the modalities of identification which the work can foster, and restores the sensus communis as the "expression of shared social sympathy" rather than the locus of ideological

interpellation. The intersubjectivity of shared aesthetic experience allows for the testing of social roles through putting oneself in the place of the other, and can be contested or confirmed by the dialogic interaction between subjects.

As I suggested earlier, Grossberg provides a mix of both what I have referred to as the modernist position, as well as aspects of Jauss' counterproposal. Like Adorno, Grossberg raises the spectre of identification as the locus of the operations of hegemony and the level on which ideology does its work. Here he suggests that the control hegemony seeks finds its object in identity, against which he poses the counter-strategy of "style" as the bricolage of signs, a strategy that is confined to the surface of images and forestalls the work of ideology, which cannot keep up with the velocity of displacement:

> By fetishizing its own surfaces, and even the part and the movement of the surface, style undermines the relationship between the surface (the body as a screen onto which identities are projected) and identity. It challenges the look, both internal and external, which seeks to see beyond the images to the identity which is the real object of hegemonic control. . . .
>
> In the density of its ever changing surfaces, youth find a space in which to empower their own transitional existence (1984b, p. 107).

The "problem" of identity is thus overcome by a strategy that seeks to manipulate surfaces, and that provides no content behind the signifier on which hegemony can work, since the space of operations that is normally "behind the back" of language itself has disappeared.

The use of style within the space constituted by the rock apparatus can thus be equated with the space of art free from alienation as posited by Adorno. Identity, the equivalent of ideological interpellation, is overcome through aesthetic practice. As an "attitude of studied indifference," it echoes the notion of disinterested interest, the attitude of Kant's subject before the aesthetic object. The reduction of the commodity to the sign-image replicates the Kantian distinction between form and function, where the use-values of the commodity, the utility of the object, is left in abeyance in the moment of pure aesthetic judgement. Disinterestedness refers to the subject's move to disregard the utility of a particular object (architecture for instance) in favour of its formal characteristics which initiate aesthetic judgements. Perhaps it is here that we can locate Grossberg's dispensation with the notion of pleasure since, in Kant, interest constitutes an impure aesthetic judgement, which is predicated on "mere" pleasure in the object, associated with fashion. To an extent, the "indifference" toward style (and hence fashion) is simply an inversion of the Kantian judgement through the perspective of a postmodernism relocating it in the temporal. Unlike the trans-historical universality of Kantian aesthetic judgements, style here seems to work on the velocity of commodity turnover. However, once sign-value replaces use-value, the bricolage play of sign-images which Grossberg describes becomes trans-

historical in the way that it makes available for appropriation all images, without any historical context to anchor them.

Affect and Aesthetic Experience

The move to affect at the expense of pleasure can be located here in the distinction between interest and disinterest. Indifference comes to mark the transcendence of the alienating effects of the everyday through the withdrawal into the sphere of play constituted by the rock and roll apparatus as the analogue to the sphere of art. The "other side" of pleasure is not unpleasure, but affect:

> . . . rock and roll [does not] transmute unpleasure into pleasure. This would not only reduce affect to pleasure and pain but it would also make rock and roll cathartic, a magical process by which unpleasure is diffused . . .
>
> What appears as a reversal on the surface of the rock and roll apparatus (that rock and roll reverses the affective charge of the excorporated event) is, consequently, only the expression of the apparatus' functioning as a transference mechanism. . . . by reproducing within itself the very structures of the everyday lives of its fans, it locates them within a different affective economy. (Grossberg 1984b, p. 105)

Catharsis becomes the key term here, although it is not clear what that means (what is the magical process?). Connected with the notion of the "diffusion of unpleasure," it appears to have the purely negative connotation that we have come to associate with catharsis, which is its manipulative aspect in regard to our emotions. But as Jauss points out, this is precisely the ambivalence of the aesthetic experience itself: "The observer, freed by the

'pleasure in the tragic object', can adopt through identification what is exemplary in the action. But he can also cushion and aesthetically neutralize the experience of identification if he does not go beyond a naive amazement at the deeds of a 'hero'" (p. 96). Thus there are two sides to the cathartic experience, both negative and positive:

> . . . it may break the hold of the real world, but in so doing, it can either bring the spectator to a free, moral identification with an exemplary action or let him remain in a state of pure curiosity. And finally, it can draw him into manipulated collective behavior through his emotional identification. This fundamental ambivalence can be seen as the price that must be paid: liberating catharsis is purchased through the mediation of the imaginary. (Ibid.)

What I want to suggest is that Grossberg blocks the discussion of aesthetic experience at one level only to restore it at another. The negative connotations of both pleasure and identification that arise historically are imported into Grossberg's discussion with the accrued meanings given through the history of modernist aesthetics and rejected on the basis of the relationship between those terms and ideological complicity. Here, the notion of affect comes to the rescue, as the "sensibility of mass culture" (1984b: 101). Sensibility is the key term in this move, echoing the "common sense" of the rhetorical tradition, the sensus communis. As I argued at the beginning, the affective alliance is in fact the sensus communis, and it is indeed the shared experience of an affective state that constitutes the community.

The undoing of Adorno occurs with the restoration of

this idea of a shared sensibility, and also provides the connection with Jauss' concept of identification, which works as the counterconcept to Adorno's monadic subject. Despite the rejection of aesthetical concepts and the absence of rhetorical terminology, affect comes to stand in for both of these. The distinction between rock and roll and art that Grossberg makes is based on an undetermined notion of what the function of art is: "rock and roll does not function as art, even though its fan's may occasionally appeal to such criteria" (1984b: 96). It is obvious, however, that he predicates this on the split between the mass popularity of the music over against an aesthetic of genius ("On this view, the only rock and roll worth talking about is that which talks to us, as the work of genius--as poetry or art" [loc. cit]). The rejection of a relation between art understood as an elite project and the mass popularity of rock music does not however necessarily imply the rejection of aesthetic effects produced through the reception of rock musics. What it does imply is the restoration of the communicative aspects of art, which appeal to the "sensibility" of mass culture, facilitated in this case by the concept of affect. The transition from one affective "economy," described as the ennui of the everyday, into another, that of the rock and roll apparatus is indeed a transference--into the space of aesthetic play in which the norms of the everyday can be thematized. Rock and roll

can thus be the expression of a mass sensibility.

In a more recent essay on the relationship between post-modernity and affect, Grossberg follows up on this notion of a mass sensibility by describing it in its simplest terms as a "mood" or affective state characteristic of postmodernity (Grossberg 1987b). Here he refers to a form of "affective communication" in which "there is no reason to assume that it is necessarily and primarily operating within either a signifying or representational economy," and where "this discursive manoeuver is neither wholly ideological nor simply semiotic. It is 'communicated' through a different mode, in a different plane of effects--the 'affective'" (p. 9). We thus see the move back towards the communicative function of art, referred to in this text as the popularity of "postmodern statements." Indeed, the definition of the artwork is reworked here to accomodate the possibility of its communicative effects, as well as relocating that function within the context of mass availability:

> It does not follow, necessarily, that art can be reduced to a commodity if we situate it in people's lives. That it is a commodity does not deny that it still may be other things as well. Moreover, the concrete complexity of the practices of consumption suggests that such artistic practices, even if they situate the audience as consumer, may also situate them in other contradictory subject positions. (p. 16)

As well, he restores the possibility of identity, suggesting that postmodernist positions on pleasure, defined as "deconstructive orgasms as the positive face of the

postmodern," ignore "the fact that, in the popular media, even the most fragmented texts and images often offer new forms of identity and coherence; fragmented identities are still identities" (p. 17-18).

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this text is the way in which affect is described as constitutive of material forms of practice. Firstly, Grossberg describes affect as contentless, as the organizing principle under which particular relationships will appear ("the terms within which such differences are possible in an affective economy" [p. 24]). Secondly:

> affect produces systems of <u>difference</u> that are <u>asignifying</u>. Affect constructs a difference, both quantitatively (as a measure of the degree of energising) and qualitatively (as a particular mood, within which other differences function. The very form of affective difference--not only the 'conditions of its possibility' but the very ways in which such differences are mapped--are not necessarily the same as those which construct other more typically discussed systems [i.e. libidinal and semiotic]. (p. 25)

The reproduction of this point in some length is to indicate how Grossberg seeks another form in which to describe certain kinds of expression ("postmodern statements") in relation to a particular (postmodern) audience. What I want to suggest is that, as I alluded to earlier, affect here stands in for what would be described in the past as an aesthetic effect. The positing of another level of effect generated by artworks, functioning in an asignifying way points to the symbolic operation of artworks in terms of the simulation of the lifeworld as described in the transference

mechanism of the rock and roll apparatus. Both a general level of affect and a specific content are contained in this model: at the general level, a prevailing "mood" indicates both the constitutive conditions for the historically specific production of certain forms of aesthetic objects (postmodern statements) as well as defining a mode of reception of those objects; in terms of content are those particular statements themselves, the specific differences which appear within the enabling affective state.

It is here that the believability, or communicative effect of postmodern statements appears, as a property of the sensus communis. Grossberg posits that "affect describes historically specific modes and organizations of material attitude or orientation;" in other words, in the form of concrete practices which characterize the community. If we turn to the rhetorical tradition once again, we see that affect is connected with belief, such that the popularity of postmodern statements is grounded in the sensus communis, through the way in which they make the world believable. This is an aesthetic effect, and does not have its basis in empirical demonstration, but rather through the agreement it evokes on the emotional/affective level:

> On the basis of the doctrine regarding the role of affect in making something believable, the rhetorical tradition since the renaissance has never failed to vindicate the logic of sensus communis (logica probabilium) as against demonstrative logic (logica veritatis) . . . Luther also made use of the rhetorical principle of movere et conciliare when he described

> what took place in the "hearer of the word" . . . [of] the rhetoricari of the Holy Spirit: "belief occurs in affect and must occur in affect because reason is incapable of making present the past and future" (Jauss 1982, p. 25).

I would also add that, in terms of the functioning of the rock and roll apparatus, it also makes possible the making present of the present, the thematization of current conditions as well as those of past and future. The feeling of disenfranchisement of youth evoked in Grossberg's description becomes the prevailing "mood" of disaffection which characterizes the affective state in which the "hearer of the word" of rock and roll enters into identification with a particular state evoked by the aesthetic object.

For Jauss, this is one of the central functions of art in the way it allows for "retrospective recognition" and recovery of a perfected world in the face of an imperfect one: "the anticipation of the imagination which is foiled by the irreparable inadequacy of the actual present can fulfill itself in what is past when the purifying power of recollection makes it possible to recover in aesthetic perfection what was experienced deficiently" (pp. 9-10). The work of art functions to preserve and transfigure past experience which would otherwise remain unrecovered, since reason alone is not enough. Art thus functions as a form of anamnesis, in the Platonic sense of a recovery of a lost world of perfection. Indeed, this is very similar to Adorno's position toward the work of art as the embodiment of values which have disappeared in the bourgeois lifeworld.

This is not of course a phenomenon specific to modernism by any means; one thinks of Poussin's visions of Arcadia, for instance. Of significance here, in relation to Grossberg, is the way that the movement is predicated on the dissatisfaction with the "actual present" which can be tolerated through the function of a recollection of a more perfect order as represented in the memory of experience preserved in works of art, echoing Grossberg's "strategies for survival" on the terrain of the postmodern.

However, the function of art is not limited to simply being a form of objectified memory, but also offers the projection of an anticipated future of a more perfect world as well. Here, the space of play and aesthetic experience that I have been exploring becomes the opening onto a different time from the quotidian which allows for new perception:

> the aesthetic experience differs from other functions in the world of the everyday by a temporality peculiar to it: It permits us to "see anew" and offers through this function of discovery the pleasure of a fulfilled present . . . it anticipates future experience and thus discloses the scope of possible action. It allows the recognition of what is past or suppressed and thus makes possible . . . the powerful identification of what he [the beholder] ought or would like to be: it permits the enjoyment of what may be unattainable or difficult to bear in life; it provides the exemplary frame of reference for situations and roles that may be adopted in naive imitation, but also in freely elected emulation (Jauss 1982, p. 10).

We see here how that experience works in both directions, in terms of the recovery of the repressed as well as through the possibilities that open toward the future. As Jauss

suggests, this is a double-edged process, fraught with the "ambivalence" which I referred to previously. The process of "detemporalization and idealization" characteristic of the work of art can also work to legitimate "their norm-setting or norm-sustaining function" which opens the communicative aspect of the work of art to the possibility of "serv[ing] as a means of ideological obfuscation" (p. 283). Anticipating my argument concerning the relation between aesthetic experience and the norm-setting agendas of political groups, we can see here how aesthetic experience opens itself to forms of manipulation, where the models offered for identification can work to "break through the real" toward a positive reconstruction of the lifeworld arising out of dissatisfaction, but they can also work to reinforce existing conditions and defer or redirect change on that basis.

Modes of Aesthetic Identification

For Jauss, this is primarily a problem of distance in relation to the aesthetic object, in which the various "interaction patterns" he identifies can be considered both from a positive and a negative perspective (p. 159; see appendix). At this point, I want to run quickly down this list before turning to a discussion of the political implications of aesthetic identification, since the various modalities of identification offer both the positive possibility of reflection and change and the negative

possibility of unreflective identification, marked by the disposition of reception defined in terms of distance.

The first, associative identification, is the adoption of the role of the other which leads to the adoption of modes of communication and attitudes which "orient social life" through the "expectations of others' actions" and thus leads to the construction of social roles. At the same time, the aesthetic pleasure of liberation in role playing can lead "through associative identification into ritual acts which cause its initially free aesthetic attitude to turn into the servitude of collective identity" (p. 167). The second modality, admiring identification, is defined through the poles of emulation and exemplarity on the one hand, and imitation and escapism on the other. Here, the hero is offered as a positive model of exemplary behaviour to be admired and emulated, and which allows the transmission of historical experience and social maxims in the form of a personal model. On the other side is the fairytale hero who "fulfills the reader's wish for rare adventure and perfect love in a wish-fulfillment world beyond everyday reality" (p. 171). It is interesting to note that Jauss addresses under this category the role of the mass media, which he claims destroys the distance necessary for admiring identification:

> Admiration as aesthetic effect thus requires an attitude that must occupy a middle ground between inadequate and excessive distance, an attitude that has clearly become quite precarious in the age of mass

> media. The "dream factory" which satisfies the demand for a "better world" sublates the cognitive distance of admiration, and the flooding of the viewer with stimuli can set off defensive strategies of unimpressionableness which cut off aesthetic communication. (pp. 171-2)

Jauss tends here to reiterate (rather naively) the escape theory of mass media. However, of interest is the concurrence with Grossberg in regard to over-stimulation, which Grossberg suggests results in forms of indifference, which seems very similar to a situation of "unimpressionableness."

The third mode, sympathetic identification, is marked by the abolition of the distance of admiration, and is rather a "projection of oneself into the alien self" which can lead to a moral interest (action to correct a wrong), or to forms of sentimentality, the enjoyment of identifying with the pain inflicted on the suffering hero (p. 172).

The final two categories, cathartic and ironic modes of identification, appear to have more importance than the others in Jauss' schema, since it is within these two modes that emancipation might be realized. In the ironic mode, the expectation of identification is refused or withdrawn, where "such procedures of ironizing identification and the destruction of illusion serve to pull the recipient out of his unreflected advertence to the aesthetic object and thus prompt his aesthetic and moral reflection . . . [which] can bring about the questioning of the aesthetic attitude as such" (pp. 181-2). The downside to ironic identification is

solipsism and "cultivated boredom." This marks perhaps the negative compulsion characteristic of Grossberg's rock and roll audience. Yet it is also at the same time the "rejection of boredom" (Grossberg 1984b, p. 108) through the transformation of the everyday within the apparatus, which corresponds to Jauss' positive pole of "responding creativity" which ironic identification can foster. Significant here is the "prompting of moral and aesthetical reflection" which can bring forward for thematization the function of the aesthetic attitude itself.

We have touched upon catharsis already within the discussion of Grossberg. It is clear that Jauss gives cathartic identification the central place in his model. In relation to the communicative aspect of art, catharsis is the "fundamental communicative aesthetic experience" (Jauss 1982, p. 35). Cathartic identification leads to the "threshold" of autonomy, where the spectator is detached from the immediate experience of identification which allows for reflection and judgement along moral lines. Here Kant's "disinterested interest" reappears as the mode characterizing the positive cathartic experience, where the spectator "rises to judgment and reflection about what is represented" (p. 178).

This is precisely where the link between the world of fiction and the everyday is bridged, and is probably the most forceful counterargument to the high modernist dogmatic rejection of that link. It is in the exemplary as portrayed

in the art work, that offers itself to moral judgement that can be carried back into everyday life. Referring to cathartic identification, Jauss insists that "as a communicative frame for possible action, the aesthetic identification of spectator and listener who enjoy themselves in and through another's fate or uncommon model can pass on or create patterns of behaviour; it can also question or break through customary behavioural norms" (p. 96). Thus art is connected to the quotidian through the models of identification and moral action it offers for emulation, in which the experience itself can be carried over into everyday practices:

> The tradition-forming and tradition-renewing power of aesthetic experience presupposes that its province of meaning is not wholly contained in the here and now of a closed subuniverse. Its transcendent character also asserts itself vis-a-vis other subuniverses . . . Aesthetic experience can form a world of its own without therefore eliding the reference back to the suspended world of everyday life . . . Rather, the aesthetic experience can enter into a communicative relation with the everyday world or any other reality and annul the polar fiction of fiction and reality . . (p. 121)

It is exemplarity which offers the possibility of moving from aesthetic judgement to moral praxis. Here Jauss refers explicitly to Kant, where the exemplary breaks through the stasis of the rule. The exemplary can "overcome the aesthetic objectification of morality by the vivid portrayal of moral sentiment and create interest in the actions themselves" (p. 111). The exemplary works through

the principle of aemulatio as a form of "free comprehension" set against "mechanical rule following" or imitatio, the two opposite poles brought forward under the modality of admiring identification. Aesthetic experience is thus characterized as a "state of balance between disinterested contemplation and testing participation . . . a mode of experiencing oneself in a possible being other which the aesthetic attitude opens up" (p. 32). (The risk here, however, is the collapse back onto genius which Gadamer accuses reception aesthetics of perpetrating. In Kant, the overcoming of the rule is the act of genius [Kant 1951, pp. 50-51]. Gadamer [1975, p. 85] criticizes reception aesthetics for shifting the burden of genius from the artist to the audience. Despite the hermeneutical guise, a phenomenological/existential take on ontology surfaces here as a potential source of trouble.)

The relation between the realm of aesthetic experience and the everyday is most evident in the sociological category of role playing. As Jauss points out, it is the aesthetic role concept which in fact grounds the "analytical-empirical theory of socially conditioned forms of action" (p. 136). The work of art provides the simulacrum of the real, thus orienting expectations toward social praxis. Jauss refers to Berger and Luckmann, describing the social as a situation in which "individual norms of behaviour are subordinated to pervasive role demands, standardized roles fit into institutions through a

process of mutual typification, and their order is secured by forms of legitimation" (p. 268), all of which are reinforced by the norms communicated through aesthetic experience derived from the work of art. The interaction patterns, explicitly compared to language games, arise out of the background of mutual consensus between those who are familiar with the code. The code, as Jauss demonstrates, works on two distinct levels; beyond the structural features (of the poetic code, eg.) determined by "extralinguistic, historically determined choices," there are also interaction patterns which appear when "actions [that] become habitual express themselves in expectations which solidify into social norms" (p. 267). These patterns appear within aesthetic objects and can be passed down without being formalized into prescriptions; as Jauss states: "what is involved here is habitual knowledge or role behaviour that can be learned through action or from models" (loc. cit). Significantly, it is art that can both provide those models, but also make those institutions of "intersubjective behaviour" available to the participant who normally takes them for granted. Here, art "conveys and justifies those [norms] that have been passed down" and at the same time also "problematizes the constraints of the institutional world, makes the roles of others understandable, creates consensus about newly-developing norms, and thus counteracts the dangers of reification and ideologizing" (p. 268).

The example that Jauss provides is the experience of a poem, conveying the idea of death. The simulacrum of the death scene provides the reader with the description of reality which conditions the expectation of that encounter in life. On the one hand, as in anamnesis, the text may offer evocative power which may be complemented by "an additional resonance that comes from memory;" on the other, it may work to orient future experience:

> the person to whom this poem conveys a first idea of a death scene will already have his expectation oriented by the aesthetic norm when he encounters such a situation in real life. Aesthetic experience appears as a world unto itself and may yet refer to the same thing as practical commerce. (266)

Thus we see that aesthetic experience can work to verify norms or feelings or actions, and can also offer the simulacrum of experience which can be then transferred into the lifeworld encounters that correspond to those which have already been experienced in interaction with a work of art.

Aesthetic Experience and Social Reality

The final point I want to address here is the role of aesthetic experience in the constitution of social reality itself. Jauss, in his reference to Berger and Luckmann, suggests that the function of aesthetic experience in the construction of social reality has been neglected. Recalling the earlier discussion of play, I noted that Jauss referred to the sphere of leisure as the condition of theorea in Aristotle, and to the rhetorical tradition where "cognition and pleasure, i.e. the theoretical and the

aesthetic attitude, were hardly differentiated" (p. 22). At one level, this indicates the appropriation of aesthetic concepts into the sphere of sociology as a means to make sense of reality. Jauss uses the example of the concept of role playing, stating that "sociological role enactment reduces the contingent entanglement of individual acts to a surveyable system of conditioned expectations which . . . can be described like texts" (p. 136). Thus, the aesthetic experience appearing in the mode of reflection on the work of art functions as the space of theoretical play which can then be ultimately transcoded into sociological concepts which work to make "readable" actions in the lifeworld. It is here that the "anticipation of the imagination which is foiled by the irreparable inadequacy of the actual present" is fulfilled through the experience of order which the work of art brings to the real. For Gadamer, the work of art is a structure which orders the chaos of the world, and thus reveals the true through the recognition we experience when confronted with it (Gadamer 1975, pp. 91-127 passim). If we consider this as the space of theory, we can then begin to recognize ourselves how contingent reality is given order through the imagination as it operates within the sphere of play that is art.

However, I think that this is only one aspect of the function of aesthetic experience, which turns on a particular position vis-a-vis the relation between

representation and the real. Under the conditions described above, the experience of recognition through exposure to the ordering structure of the work of art is that of memory, of anamnesis. As Josue Harari points out, the traditional view of representation is that "an image depicts not the real in itself, but rather the real in its absence" (Harari 1987: 58). It would be unfair of me to implicitly suggest that this is Gadamer's (and Jauss') position, since neither hold to a simple mimetic relationship between the real and its image. For Gadamer, the fact that the work represents the world through ordering it suffices to indicate that it is not simply a copy, but that its representative success is contingent upon its recognition value. The point I want to make here is that this is always retrospective, that the truth is recognized a posteriori, and to that extent the artwork refers to a real which it purports to represent in the real's absence.

However, as Harari points out in relation to social and political theory (Rousseau, Montesquieu), "the image (representation) does not point back to the real that it allegedly reproduces, but rather points to the real by means of the network of signification it lends to the real" (p. 58). Therefore, in the exact opposite manner to the notion of constructing an image which would conform directly to reality, the "relationship of anteriority and resemblance between thing and image" is reversed, "implying by this reversal that there is no experience of the real without an

image" and thus we must consider theory, appearing through the imaginary, "not in terms of a memory or return . . . but rather of fitting the real to the dimensions of the imaginary" (pp. 58-9).

It is within the imaginary that the world thus takes on its characteristics. The significance of this is found in the way that the image orders the world, the way in which the image produces the world. As Harari demonstrates, this is not limited to a retrospective recognition of the world but is in fact the basis of the real itself. Thus Jauss' claim in regard to the construction of social reality is backed up by the function of the imaginary as described by Harari. If the real appears through its image, then it is possible to grasp the relation between aesthetic experience and theory as inseparable, despite the analytic distinction of modernism, which divides aesthetic experience from knowledge of the world. The space of leisure, of play, and of the imagination characteristic of the aesthetic attitude is thus the sphere in which the real is constituted through the images constructed and reflected upon within that sphere; thus, the aesthetic attitude does not merely mark the space in which the past is reconstructed and made meaningful, but is also the domain of theoretical play which gives meaning to the world itself through the way it is figured in aesthetic play.

Exemplary Conduct

As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, good reasons or rational proof no longer act as the guarantee of meaningfulness, and moral conduct is not grounded in discursive proofs, but in the recognition of exemplary actions and their emulation.

In order to begin to understand how this might be accomplished, I turned to a discussion of aesthetic experience which provided us with the concept of identification derived from Jauss. The concept of identification allows for an understanding of how the work of art functions in its communicative aspect in the promulgation and sketching out of norms for social conduct. The various modalities of identification outlined by Jauss indicated the different dispositions toward reception which characterize the ways in which aesthetic experience offers models of behaviour which can both reinforce and critique norms through the relationship between aesthetic experience and everyday life.

I turned to Grossberg's work primarily to indicate how aesthetic practices offer the means by which to negotiate the terrain of the everyday. Here, we saw how the identification with "postmodern statements" corresponded to the space of play that characterizes the aesthetic attitude, and also characterizes the movement toward certain forms of aesthetic practices arising out of the dissatisfaction with the lifeworld. The mobilization of youth through the

aesthetic models offered by rock and roll ultimately returns itself to the lifeworld through various forms of expression and lifestyles which constitute communities through the collective identity with one or another of these forms.

Finally, I turned to notion of the imaginary to suggest that images are themselves constitutive of the real, and thus the theoretical and the aesthetical cannot be easily distinguished, since it is through aesthetic experience that the real in fact appears; the "advent" of the real, as Harari puts it, is the product of the "imag-inary." Here, the artwork as the ordering of chaos is the example, where the contingent is subdued through the representative and communicative functions of the work of art, which allows us to recognize ourselves in the work through its retrospective ordering of experience, and allows us to project order into the future by sketching models to be emulated.

Once we have reached this stage of inquiry, it is now possible to return to the discussion of political communication, equipped with an aesthetics restored to its place in the lifeworld (elided by modernism). It should be kept in mind that this is not a sublated aesthetics, or an attempt to elevate it at the expense of the other spheres. Rather, it is the bringing back of what Habermas (1985) calls "the effects of the inner logical differentiation of a special sort of experience" (p. 200), which can be traced back into the lifeworld. On the one hand, we must avoid the

premature sublation of aesthetics, through the recognition of the specific logic, so to speak, of the expressive sphere. On the other, this specific logic can then be linked to (political) action contexts through the effects of this "special sort of experience" as I have outlined here.

NOTES

1. It is important to note at the outset that the differing approaches to subjectivity on the part of Jauss and Grossberg renders the following discussion somewhat problematical. Indeed, given the parallels between them drawn out here, an investigation and comparison of the two positions (Grossberg's desire to modify the psychoanalytic subject and his debate with Marxism; Jauss' appropriation of a phenomenological/hermeneutical subject taken from Gadamer and Heidegger) would be both interesting and profitable. However, this is not the appropriate place to undertake such a study, as useful as it would be. Its absence does not adversely affect what follows, but the different trajectories of the two authors must be borne in mind when trying to read them together in this way.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION
TOWARD AN AESTHETIC OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

From Private to Public and Back Again

George Duby, in an essay on private life in the medieval world, notes that the idea of the public sphere of the state inherited from Roman law and maintained during the Carolingian empire is usurped by the ever-expanding private domain of the feudal order. Power was transferred into the private hands of the lords of the manor, whose territory was signified by barriers and emblems that marked the difference between it and the constantly shrinking common space. Privacy was thus signified by the right of exclusion, where even the magistrate (who upheld the "public" good) was unable to enter the domus without the permission of the head of the household, and unable to enforce the law within its barriers except at his behest. As public space shrinks, and dominion over private space expands, the role of the state is replaced by the lord's absolute control over his land and the people who reside within it. The pinnacle of this shift, as Duby points out, occurs much later, and is expressed in the phrase "L'etat c'est moi," which

acknowledges the king's ownership of all within the boundaries of his kingdom.

I begin with this image of medieval life only to suggest that we are experiencing the inversion of this pattern: the domus and the private sphere, always defined in a dialectical relationship to the public, is increasingly exteriorized and thematized as the discursive object of the state. The restoration of the public sphere through the reappearance of representative government, as well as the appearance of the market as the space of unrestricted public interaction, has led to the shrinkage of private space, although not to the right to property, which has simply been extended under Lockean principles to everyone. As I noted in the discussion of hygiene, in 18th century France the domestic space became the focus of a series of moral panics, where concern over congestion (and licentiousness) in the dwellings of the poor led to the incursion of the law into the private domain in the interests of public health. Here, the interests of the "public" begin to take precedence over private (and, I suppose, the less powerful). As Alain Corbin has suggested, this marks not only the intrusion of the public into the private realm for the good of those it affects in an altruistic sense, but also has the additional benefit of ensuring the collective health of a much needed labour pool during industrialization (Corbin 1986, pp. 153-154).

This marks out what appears as a contradiction at the heart of the operations of the modern state, which is the tension between the preservation of the individual's rights and the maintainance of the common good (however that might be defined). In contrast to the feudal order, where the private whim of the master is all that matters, the modern forms of democratic government find themselves somewhere in the middle, acting as Habermas (1975) suggests as mediators between the market and the individuals that the market's operations displace. Legitimation is then determined largely on the basis of the perceived technical expertise at steering the economy. However, what I have been suggesting throughout this paper is that legitimation, as the source of the worthiness to be recognized as having the right to govern, is increasingly a question of ethos, that has less to do with providing "good reasons" (Wallace 1971) for particular strategies for steering the economy, and more to do with motivating key signifiers (freedom, equality, e.g.) through exemplary modes of behaviour. In other words, the guarantee which secures access to certain forms of signification is determined in an apriori manner, through a moral/aesthetical praxis which legitimates the appropriation of the key signifiers.

This is accomplished through processes of aesthetical identification rather than good reasons, through the example rather than in discursive validity claims. Politicians and governments increasingly seek to back their claims for power

through the thematization of the private sphere of conduct and at the same time appropriate it as subject to power. In terms of the first aspect, private has indeed become public, as the case of Gary Hart demonstrates, wherein the division between private and public life is erased, and no distinction is made between exemplary conduct in the public sphere and in the home; one is collapsed onto the other an all aspects become objects of scrutiny.[1]

The second aspect is more complex and works on a number of different levels. The erosion of claims of technical competence seems to imply a shift toward moral/aesthetical forms of differentiation between groups and persons competing for legislative power. The sense that party structures are interchangable at the technical level fosters the construction of difference at another level. Here the claims that back up the appropriation of the same set of codes and key terms comes into force, where the signifiers become indexes that point to exemplary practices. At the same time, increasing dissatisfaction with technical solutions requires other forms of suasion, and marks the increasing appropriation of aesthetic strategies to promulgate norms, as compromise through technical legislation loses its force. The use of the media by politicians to simulate proper conduct crosses over and erases the distinction between public and private, in order that the private may become the locus for the enforcement of

public good, determined by those who have obtained the "right" to rule.

A case in point is the television campaign currently underway in British Columbia that is designed to encourage single women not to terminate their pregnancies, but rather to give birth and then put the children up for adoption. What is interesting here is the way in which the government has chosen this particular means by which to promote a policy, transcoded into the scene of the commerical, as opposed to the conventional mechanisms the government employs to inform the populace of its initiatives. A certain ambiguity arises here as to the role the government is adopting (no pun intended), since the "policy" promoted by the commercials is not reflected in any legislation. In these commericals, the pregnant woman is surrounded by loving friends and/or relatives, against the backdrop of a middle-income domestic setting, where she is encouraged to bear her child, ostensibly, it seems, for the good of the state. There is a warrant, the commercials suggest, to bring the child to term, if not for herself, then as a service to those couples unable to bear children themselves; thus this action is at the same time a selfless act of generosity and virtue and for the general public good as well. Of course, this is backed up by the threat of economic sanctions in the form of withdrawal of welfare payments, and indirectly through the government's refusal to subsidize abortion clinics.

Against former prime minister Pierre Trudeau's statement that the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation, these commercials could be considered as a dismantling of that dictum, and in the extreme reading, the public appropriation of the last refuge of privacy, the body. In fact it is the failure of the technical control over the body embedded in legislation, or more precisely the Supreme Court's rendering that legislation invalid under the Charter of Rights provisions of the Constitution (propped up, I would think, by a perceived de facto social practice--Morgenthaler, e.g.).[2] In doing so, the Supreme Court effectively transformed control over the body from a technical compromise backed up by the coercive structures of the state into a private ethical decision.[3] This problematizing of the technical sphere and the effective control over the body within it induces the government to shift to a rhetorical strategy whereby it can reassert its hegemony over the body. Once the technical/legislative compromise is ruled out as the domain in which the government can exercise control over the body, the struggle for possession reappears within the moral dimension, where the government appropriates the media to make its case, where property rights are magically transformed into moral conduct.

Power and Simulacra

Karl Wallace (1971), in his essay entitled "The

Substance of Rhetoric: Good Reasons," suggests that the rhetorician should look for "good reasons" which are offered in support of an ought proposition or of a value judgement" (p. 368). Rhetoric then becomes the "art of finding and effectively presenting good reasons" (p. 369). Good reasons are statements that offer proof for the validity of the various oughts that guide our social practices.

At one level, one might argue that Wallace unwittingly raises the spectre of the is/ought or fact/value dilemma (as his examples seem to suggest), where he takes descriptive statements as conditions which entail value judgements, thus committing himself to derive ought from is. If it is the case that ought cannot be derived from is, then empirical statements cannot be offered as proof for valid claims, and hence good reasons do not suffice to justify ethical decisions, nor can axioms be derived from them. As I suggested at the beginning of the last chapter, in a lifeworld organized through affect or aesthetic experience, good reasons or rational proof no longer act as the guarantee of meaningfulness, and moral conduct is not grounded in discursive proofs, but in exemplary actions and their emulation.

This long and complex digression which is the substance of this thesis is situated here, in terms of thematizing the aesthetic as the site at which political interests reappear to contest claims for power in moral, not economic (hence

ideological) terms. Two reasons dominated this excessive investigation into aesthetics: one, that the communicative aspect of the work of art must be restored in order that we might begin to grasp the processes of identification and receptive dispositions in relation to representations, and understand this as aesthetic, by which I mean to differentiate it from the level of discursive effects (i.e. ideology)--it must be recognized that the artwork is not mimetic and is (as theory) constitutive of the real through its representative function; and two, that aesthetic experience does not appear only within the autonomous social subsystem of art, but there is also an interaction, a dialectical relationship, if I can put it that way, between aesthetic experiences arising in the sphere of disengaged reflection characterized as play and the lifeworld or other social subsystems, where interaction with works of art offers a way of reorganizing experiences in the face of dissatisfaction with the lifeworld, and also allows for the presentation of models or roles of conduct which can be taken up and thus imported back into the quotidian.

As I have hopefully demonstrated, this is true not only for those works considered as art within the institutional structures that constitute the semi-autonomous artworld as we know it today, but, as the case of Grossberg was to indicate, is also true of mass media. This then begs the question of the effects of interaction patterns with the media, and points to the gap left unthematized by both

rhetorical and ideological critiques, if we consider both as forms of discursive analysis. As Grossberg suggests, the work of affect is asignifying, and to that extent is "neither wholly ideological nor simply semiotic," and thus cannot be contained within conventional discursive models. The positing of another level of affect/effect, aesthetic experience, opens an avenue toward the possibility of thematizing a mass sensibility which cannot simply be determined either through the rationality of discursive validity claims, nor through the restoration of distorted communication. If the postmodern, following Baudrillard's claims, is made out of a system of signs characterized by the absence of meaning, then the operations of ideology "behind the back" of language cease to function. As Grossberg suggests, contra Baudrillard, this does not necessarily imply the collapse of the social, but does indicate the disruption of the relation between ideology and the real: "it is not the social that has imploded but a particular ideological structure which seems no longer effective" (Grossberg 1987a, p. 43).

It is here that for Grossberg, the notion of affective relations come to the fore to describe interactions and forms of identification with television, where the "in-difference" of television offers the site in which ideology becomes a pose, and to that extent is consistent with Jauss' ironic mode which can produce forms of indifference

(Grossberg 1987a, pp. 44-45; Jauss, pp. 181-182). I would suggest, however, that this cannot be considered as its only effect, but rather, following Jauss, that there are a range of possible modes of identification "between the extremes of the norm-breaking and norm fulfilling function, between the progressive change of horizon and the adaptation to a ruling ideology" in which the ironic mode of indifference is only one.

What then is the import of this thematization of aesthetic experience in relation to political communication? In the first instance, it is evident that governments are seeking an increasing presence in the media. In its yearly presentation of the list of the top one hundred advertising spenders in Canada, Marketing magazine reported that the Government of Canada was in first place, with an expenditure in 1987 of nearly sixty-six and a half million dollars. The Ontario government was listed in tenth place, having spent close to twenty-eight million dollars (Marketing, Mar. 7/88: 21). Clearly, governments consider the use of the media to be of significant value, to the extent that they outspend the largest corporations in this country. By themselves, these numbers do not have much meaning, but the volume itself indicates that governments are making extensive use of the media to disseminate information far beyond obtaining access to the press corps.

One possible way of making sense of this is to suggest that the collapse of ideology implicit in the postmodernist

description of a condition marked by the absence of meaning precludes contestation over substantive issues through discursive claims, if those claims cannot be backed up by any security in regard to their meanings. Yet, in order to appropriate and exercise institutional power (which, if Grossberg is correct, still exists, despite the claim that power disappears with meaning [Grossberg 1987a, p. 43]), governments must seek a consensus elsewhere; employing the conventional categories of rhetorical argument, I would suggest that this induces a move away from logos to ethos and pathos in which the media provide the scene upon which those forms of contestation can be most effectively portrayed. In regard to the increasing distance between affect and ideology, Grossberg states that "it is if one were to experience and in certain ways live values without actually investing in them (it doesn't matter what matters) because our affective investments seem to have already been determined elsewhere, in another scene" (Ibid., p. 44), and if as I claimed earlier, that affect is the equivalent to aesthetic experience, then that other scene for its determination is the media.

One of the reasons for arguing that the sphere of art cannot be considered as the last refuge of freedom or a realm free from alienation was to indicate that aesthetic experience itself was open to manipulation, and hence to the operations of power, and that this is not simply a matter of

the commodification of the sphere of art itself (as some postmodern critics would have it), but is also a question of the communicative effects of the work of art itself, whether mass produced or not; thus it is not just a question of consumption, but also how it is articulated with the life of the subject or subjects. As Jauss notes, this is characterized by a fundamental ambivalence to the aesthetic experience, which at one extreme can break through sedimented social norms, and at the other lead to "adaptation to ruling ideology," and this was meant to indicate how the domain of the aesthetic is also open to the operations of power.

Thus, if consensus no longer appears within discursive strategies, I suggest that governments will seek to obtain the necessary legitimations to govern on the terrain of the aesthetic. The connection with the media is made by the realization that working on the terrain of ethos and pathos requires the use of forms of exemplary action, not good reasons, and it is the media, especially television that provide the space in which those examples can be simulated. This does not suggest that a reading of a given text will suffice to guarantee its effects, since it is within the site of an audience that the effect is determined, in terms of the various modes of identification that I have outlined. At this level of abstraction, all that can be posited is that range (which is not an exhaustive one) of dispositions, whose specific effects would have to be determined locally

and with regard to the way in which the advertisement is articulated with the other discourses constitutive of subjects at given historical junctures, and indeed in the way the advertisement competes for attention in the media themselves.

If the invocation of certain signifiers is no longer a guarantee of meaning and technical compromise no longer is sufficient to justify certain forms of control, then legitimation does indeed need to be determined "in another scene." Recently, much attention has been paid to the notion of a "politics of style," which I think is symptomatic of this relocation onto the terrain of the aesthetic. As I suggested at the beginning, this was the case with Gary Hart, who both gained and lost a constituency on the basis of the exemplarity of his behaviour, and thus offered himself as a model in the sense of the modalities of identification outlined above, falling somewhere in between the perfect and imperfect hero, the transition to the latter possibly signalling his ultimate downfall. What is significant in this case is the sense that both the rise and decline in popularity were predicated not on any particular substantive issues; one does not remember what Gary Hart "stood for" except as one who was able to mobilize a large segment of the population through the category of youth. Increasingly, it is conduct that becomes the focus of attention, over against any particular platforms that may be

espoused. This seems to appear as the logical form, if X, then Y, where exemplary behaviour (X) stands as the guarantee of being a good politician (Y).

It is difficult to suggest what may determine this particular shift. All I want to do here is point out the transfer into this domain. Although ethos, the need to engender trust in his or her project, has always been a significant part of any politician's work, I am suggesting that this is increasingly the place where legitimacy is obtained and maintained, over against technical positions on the economy and the like. Here, politics moves onto aesthetical terrain through the use of the media which offers the means to create simulacra of the lifeworld, either in terms of a conservative project by the invocation of a perfect past to be restored (the work of art as anamnesis), or from a liberal perspective of the projection of norms to be instituted in the future. The key aspect of this is the functioning of the simulacra. In this case, the use of the media by the political apparatus signifies the attempt to invoke the social in a meaningful way through the use of representations that are not merely textual, not simply semiotic, but also affective, in terms of the way they construct a scene which functions metonymically in relation to the viewer's experiences. The positing of the concept of identification allows primarily for insight into how these processes function without resorting to purely textual analysis, texts which as Grossberg points out in

regard to "postmodern statements" are too fragmented and decontextualized to analyze in terms of any immanent meaning.

Once we have restored the communicative function of art and developed the concept of identification, we can begin to grasp the effects of the political use of the media as a means by which to exercise hegemony. The advertisment (as the equivalent of the work of art) becomes the means to simulate the lifeworld in a certain way, and works to foster forms of identification which become constitutive of communities. It is the intersubjective aspect that is crucial here, in the idea of shared experience, the sensibility of mass culture. On the one side as Grossberg suggests, this can become the means to direct action in the face of dissatisfaction with the lifeworld in a counter-hegemonic fashion. Of course, as he also points out, there is no guarantee that the cultural resources available to do so will be used in such a way, and I am suggesting that in fact, it is the ruling agencies who are increasingly putting those resources to work on the side of hegemony itself. If as Grossberg describes, the characteristic action of the category of youth today is a retreat into aestheticized forms of behaviour, then this is the site on which politics will be contested.

A trivial example in keeping with the uses of rock musics is the recent campaign by the federal government to

stop smoking amongst teenagers. Here, Luba and Corey Hart (stand-ins for the late eighties notion of Canadian success, thus their ideological significance) do what they do, to the theme of "break free," the slogan of the campaign. In the context of the notion of aesthetic identification, it is not however what they say, but what they do. Here, identification with the exemplary marks precisely what Jauss referred to as emulation, which "can bridge the gap between aesthetic judgement and moral praxis." In this case, the exhortation to "break free" gets its warrant from the scene it helps to contextualize. The "ought" in this context is not connected in any way with "good reasons" for not smoking (for which there are many), but through the simulacrum of a lifeworld which is the promise of non-smoking. The exemplary conduct of those within this scene is constructed within the space of the simulacrum of a "rock and roll apparatus" and indicates the government's movement onto that terrain to contest social norms. (I think it is appropriate to add that in this case, the federal government seems to feel that it cannot have competition on this terrain over this particular issue, and has recently legislated a ban on tobacco advertising, thus giving itself free reign over this topic in the media.).

An explicit example of the use of media to contest moral praxis is the recent "family education" campaign underway in British Columbia mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. As outlined to me by the Premier's Press

Secretary, the campaign is designed to outline the various "options" available to the family, ranging from the use of contraception to foster parenting to adoption. As I noted at the beginning, the key strategy in regard to the adoption commercials is to suggest adoption as a viable, if not the only acceptable, alternative to abortion as a solution to unwanted pregnancy. Once again, I would suggest that it is the example that offers itself to be emulated, and that the scene itself works metonymically in terms of a composition characteristic of a middle-class environment to engage the viewer in relation to his or her own history, or with other representations of an idealized, fully aestheticized simulacrum of what that environment would be like which circulate in our culture. Against this is the simulacrum of the family itself, where the question of adoption becomes a collective one, the "ought" being the restoration of the stability of the family through playing one's part by making the "right" decision. If I may be permitted to add another term to an already lengthy list, the simulation of the family circumstance (read crisis of unwanted child, which is not unwanted at all, except perhaps by its uncaring, selfish mother) is characteristic of what Ien Ang terms "emotional realism" which she coined to express the fact that viewers identified with soap opera characters on an emotional level in terms of the identity between the experience of the characters and those of the viewers, disregarding the non-

correspondance between the viewer's socio-economic status and those of the characters in Dallas (Ang 1985, pp. 44-45). The fact that they aren't "real" is irrelevant, since the situations which they face do correspond to circumstances which the viewers must negotiate in their daily lives. The correspondence is thus not on the level of the "truth" of economic conditions (in which a clear contradiction exists between the televisual scene and the social reality of the viewers), but at the level of the experience of emotional identification with the characters. This I think also holds true of the adoption commercials. However, the significant difference is that Dallas is a soap opera, and hence a deliberately fictionalized account (of which as Ang points out, the viewers are well aware); the adoption commercials on the other hand are the product of the government of British Columbia. My argument, at one level, suggests that they are the same, and this is the key reason for attempting to show that governments do indeed contest their claims through aesthetic strategies, thus the distinction between fictions at one level is difficult to make. However, at another level, there is a clear difference between the two, not only in terms of their respective sources, but also in intended effect. Whether or not the effect is as intended is up for debate (my suspicions are that in this case it is not, since in all likelihood the majority of unwanted pregnancies occur in single women of lower socio-economic status, where moral

good may be displaced by economic survivalism); even if television's programming function is only to deliver the audience to the advertisers, the irony is that the government is waiting there as the purchaser of the spot.

In any case, a full empirical investigation is outside the scope of this essay. The examples proffered here are intended to indicate how the thematization of aesthetic experience and modes of identification is proper in the investigation of political communication, and indeed offers another level that seeks to overcome the aporias that appear within conventional ideological analysis which takes a meaning-immanent text as its object. That is not to say that aesthetic strategies are not ultimately linked to ideological goals, but rather to suggest that the formation of consensus works through modes of aesthetic identification rather than through discursive or semiotic manoeuvers. If, as I have suggested, governments increasingly seek to legitimize the control over institutions of power in other ways than rational discursive claims, the thematization of aesthetic attitudes is essential to understand the symbolic processes that are appropriated toward the legitimization of power. The increasing use of advertising by governments indicates the appropriation of the media to do that work. The restoration of the communicative function of the work of art and its norm-sustaining and norm-creating aspects over against the dogma of autonomy and disinterest is the first

stage in this endeavour. Once this is re-established, it is then possible to make available the concept of aesthetic experience as an essential part of the formation of political communities and constituencies. Here, the postmodernism of signifying practices links up with the notions of taste as the basis of the sensus communis, where action is predicated on collective aesthetic experiences. What needs further study on this basis is the effects of the intervention of governments into the sphere of aesthetic production, and how that may work to form communities on the basis of forms of aesthetic identification, which are then translated back into everyday praxis. As both Jauss and Grossberg suggest, the ambivalence of the aesthetic experience clearly indicates that the modalities of identification have positive aspects in terms of empowerment or emancipation, but can also be the site for further alienation and the reinforcement of existing conditions of unequal distributions of power. Judging by the figures, the governments have made the decision to buy into the aesthetic domain in order to promulgate social norms of behaviour that reflect an interested representation of the social. The theoretical aspects of aesthetic experience worked through in this essay can be considered only as the first steps toward an understanding of how this domain is constitutive of social reality. Ultimately, this must go one step further toward a critique of aesthetic practices in order to demonstrate what effect the shift toward aesthetic

production and reception has in regard to social formations and their links with particular political interests.

NOTES

1. This marks the major difference between Hart and the Kennedys to whom he was compared. The press and others as we now know suppressed information about the private lives of both Robert and John Kennedy, potentially scandalous information that was revealed only subsequent to their respective deaths. As the situation Hart faced demonstrates, this is no longer the case.

2. Clearly the failure of juries in the lower courts to convict Morgenthaler of performing illegal abortions contributed to the ruling of the Supreme Court on his test case under the Charter of Rights provisions in the Constitution; a document that was not made law until after his acquittals.

3. I am indebted to Maurice Charland for bringing this aspect to my attention.

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APPENDIX

Interaction Patterns of Identification with the Hero

Modality of Identification	Reference	Receptive Disposition	Norms of Behaviour or Attitude (+ = progressive) (- = regressive)
associative	game/ competition (celebration)	placing oneself into roles of all other participants	+ pleasure of free (pure sociability) - permitted excess (regression into archaic rituals)
admiring	the perfect hero (saint, sage)	admiration	+ aemulatio - imitatio + exemplariness - edification/entertainment by the extraordinary (need for escape)
sympathetic	the imperfect hero	compassion	+ moral interest (readiness to act) - sentimentality (enjoyment of pain) + solidarity for specific action - self-confirmation (tranquilization)
cathartic	the suffering hero	tragic emotion/ liberation of heart and mind	+ disinterested interest/ free reflection
	the beset hero	sympathetic laughter/ comic relief for heart and mind	- fascination (bewitchment) + free moral judgement - mocking laughter (ritual of laughter)
ironic	the vanished or anti-hero	alienation (provocation)	+ responding creativity - solipsism + refinement of perception - cultivated boredom + critical reflection - indifference

(From Jauss 1982: 159)