

**INCIPIENDUM, AD INFINITUM: CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN
ETHICOPOLITICAL FRAMEWORK AND THE POTENTIAL FOR ART AS ITS
EXPRESSION**

LANA MARY PARKER

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATION
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

JUNE, 2015

© LANA MARY PARKER 2015

ABSTRACT

In this work, I delineate the foundations for an ethical politics toward societal transformation, paying particular attention to how the process can be expressed using the arts. I do not advocate for a particular hegemony, but, in the course of explicating the framework, will describe certain epistemological or ontological tenets that are necessary in order for the process to unfold. I begin with an outline of what I mean by an ethical politics, turning to Levinas, Rancière, and Arendt to lay the groundwork for the importance of the other, and to establish the significance of beginning, of moving toward what always lies beyond the horizon. From there, I build an argument that the arts can offer a unique and important means of realising the ethicopolitical process, since they can function as both an other and an interruption. Because not all art can be considered an other or an interruption, I distinguish between art as interruptive, or art for the political, and art that conforms or extends the values and principles of the state. Upon preparing the rudiments of the ethicopolitical framework and clarifying which types of art may be utilised in the process, I trace how art, through the sub-processes of inspiration and realisation, can represent the ethicopolitical steps of listening and speaking. I also address why I believe art is a unique expression of the ethicopolitical process, because of its inherent appeal to affect. I elaborate the framework using a case study of the Chinese artist and dissident, Ai Weiwei. In conclusion, I suggest that in order to preserve and nurture the promise of arts as an interruption toward sociopolitical transformation, a particular kind of pedagogy is required.

DEDICATION

To CUP, for everything.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been kindly and generously supported throughout the process of this dissertation.

First, I would like to thank Sharon Murphy for leading lightly and perceptively, illuminating even the corners of my work. Thank you for guiding my writing and also my learning by considering not just my research, but who I am within that space.

Thank you also to Don Dippo and Mario Di Paolantonio, who offered me challenge and encouragement by asking questions, thinking alongside me for solutions, and being patient with my risks.

To all my students, thank you for helping me see every day that the work of philosophy, politics, and ethics is not esoteric.

Thank you to my parents, who were my first teachers, for challenging me to be curious yet humble-hearted.

Finally, especially, I would like to thank my husband, Adamo. Your patience, intelligence, and unwavering love have permitted me to play in tenuous spaces without floating away.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS... ..	v
 1. INCIPIENDUM, AD INFINITUM: TOWARD AN ETHICAL POLITICS.....	 1
Building a Framework for Ethics and Politics	3
The Dualities of the I/Other and State/ <i>Demos</i>	3
The Perilous Loss of the Common World	13
The ‘salve of elucidation’: Worldlessness and the loss of the other.....	16
A vanishing table: Worldlessness and the proliferation of private needs	19
Collapsing spaces: Worldlessness and a failure of the partition of the sensible	22
 2. ART AS OTHER	 26
Art and Levinas.....	28
Art and Arendt	33
Art and Rancière	36
 3. WHEN IS ART POLITICAL?.....	 40
Thinking About the Interruptive Function of Art	40
When art does not interrupt, but conforms.....	41
Conforming and entertaining.....	42
Conforming, inculcating and informing.....	45
Failing to conform: When art interrupts.....	51
Art interrupting art	57
Art interrupting societal conventions.....	59
Art interrupting the state.....	61
Art from the past interrupting the present.....	62
Does Medium Matter?.....	67

4. LISTENING AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION	77
Reconciling Levinas and Art as Other	78
Knowledge Versus Wisdom	82
Listening for Inspiration	86
5. ART AS AN ACT OF SPEAKING FOR FREEDOM	90
Levinas and the Ethics of Speaking	90
Ranci�re and the Politics of Speaking	94
Interruptive Art as a Call to the Other, an Apology and an Act of Interpretation ...	98
6. ART, LOVE, AND HOPE	105
In the Absence of Love	105
Hope and Equality of Access	110
7. ART AND THE ARTIST, TOWARD	115
The Advantages and Limitations of Case Studies	116
Documentary as Art	119
Setting the Stage: Art and the Politics of Art in China	120
<i>Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry</i>	124
Overview	124
Listening	129
Ai as listener	129
Ai as teacher	134
Speaking	138
On the outside	139
Creating subjectivities	144
The Common World	149
Daring Tenuousness: Ai's Art as Other	156
8. A PEDAGOGY FOR BEGINNING	164
The Pursuit of Freedom	165
“Making Strange”: The Promise of Art and the Possibility for Democracy	168
Concluding Thoughts	179
REFERENCES	181

CHAPTER 1

INCIPIENDUM, AD INFINITUM: TOWARD AN ETHICAL POLITICS

Men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin.

(Arendt, 1998, p. 246)

The purpose of my work is to shed a hopeful and constructive light on the possibilities for social and political reform beyond critique. Two themes run through my work: first, the more apparent, is the viability of art as a means of expression of the ethicopolitical framework for engendering change; second, and perhaps even more significant to my purpose, is the power of the individual as a singular agent for effecting change.

This study addresses the condition of contemporary politics and the ethics which guide them. More specifically, in this analysis, I propose that the post-industrial emergence of liberalism, neoliberalism, and neoconservatism has resulted in the eclipsing of the public good by the private world, culminating in what can only be described as a perilous loss of the common world. As a counterpoint to these dominant hegemonies, I seek to establish alternate ways of thinking about responsibility, freedom, and the struggle for democracy through a particular reading of ethics and politics. To develop my ethical and political framework, I bring together three key philosophers, Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Rancière, to propose a relationship between the processes of listening and speaking, and to suggest a possibility for an ethical politics that is oriented toward the

building of a common world. What I develop here is not a model—to create a model is to reify a way of doing or being that is fundamentally at odds with the philosophical underpinnings of this work. Instead, what I put forward is an orientation, a positioning, a turning toward the other that I hope will offer a way of beginning and a way to facilitate political action that brings us ever closer to a “democracy to come” (Derrida & Caputo, 1997, p. 43).

It may seem unexpected that although the cynosure of this work is on the other and on listening, I propose that the secondary focus of this work is on the power of every person’s capacity as a political actor. Such is the aporia built into the process of the ethical politics I recommend: one needs the other to listen, make meaning, learn, and be inspired; yet, one must begin with the decision *to* listen, *to* make meaning, *to* learn, *to* be inspired, and *to* act. Thus, one of the goals of this work is to provoke reflection on the ethics and politics requisite for change. And still, even more pressingly, it is my greater desire to inspire readers toward the necessary orientation for change. In the vein of personal goals, I propose that this dissertation will reflect my personal decision to begin. This study, and these words, are my attempt to provoke change by speaking (writing) after listening (questioning). Not only do I attempt to outline the process for an ethical politics, especially as it can be actualised through art, but I simultaneously attempt to proceed through the process in what can only be described as an action toward democracy, my attempt to make sense of the spaces between myself and the rest of the world. In reference to his own writing, Rancière (2013) expresses that to write this way is to reflect “an egalitarian or anarchist theoretical position that does not presuppose this vertical relationship of top to bottom” (p. 46). I contemplate this point at the outset, and will return to it in my concluding

remarks, because it shapes the way in which I approach this study and affects how I position the ideas I advance.

Finally, it is important to note that while I use the arts as a possibility for substantiating the ethicopolitical framework I develop, the fruition of this process is not limited to the arts; it is simply a useful starting point, an opportunity for even those who feel most confined by the constraints of their society to feel the possibilities of starting, of beginning, of creating.

Building a Framework for Ethics and Politics

Before determining how it comes to be that art can function as a means for producing change according to an ethical politics, I must commence with a description of how I define ethics and how one might enact this ethics through a political process. The most significant tenet for both the ethics and the politics I advocate, based on a triad of philosophers and theorists (Arendt, 1998; Levinas, 1989; 2011; Rancière, 1991; 2001; 2003; 2011³) is that every potential individual political actor requires the presence of an other. Once the importance of this other has been established, I make a case for why this framework is necessary using Arendt's (1998) conception of worldlessness.

The Dualities of I/Other and State/*Demos*

In thinking about this framework, about the tension, space, and movement requisite for ethics and politics, and in seeking a way to represent it visually, I came upon a mathematical model known as Fermat's spiral (Sanbec, 2004; Weisstein, n.d.).

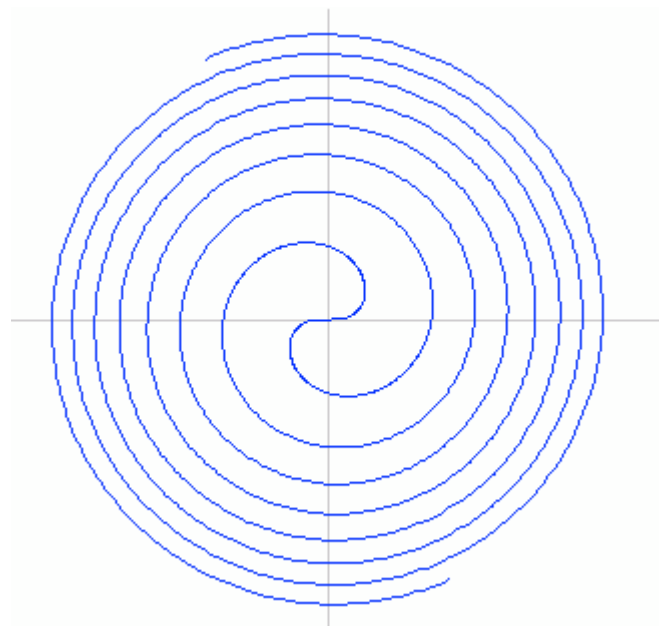


Figure 1. Fermat's spiral (Sanbec, 2004). A potential visual representation of the ethicopolitical framework.

This image depicts a parabolic spiral developed through polar equations that provides a sense of what it might look like to begin, toward infinity. It is a useful diagram because it furnishes, graphically, a representation of the necessary tensions, or dualities¹, that are essential to ethics and politics: two forces moving simultaneously, and always expanding outward with no boundaries or terminus. One such tension is found in Levinas (1989) through the cleavage of 'I' from the other; it is present once again in the work of Rancière (2001), who distinguishes between the state and the *demos*; and it is represented in Arendt's (1998) descriptions of politics and the common world. These tensions have been lost in contemporary discussions of politics, democracy, and freedom at a pernicious cost.

¹This is a term that I use with intention throughout this study. I have borrowed and adapted the term from Rancière (2001) and use it to denote a necessary tension between two sides, creating a space that is necessary for the growth of ethics and the work of democracy. I recognise that the term has previously been used in various contexts, including by Giddens to describe structure in social systems (Sewell, 1992), but am here only drawing and elaborating on the denotation provided by Rancière. My definition of duality is less about firm categories, than it is about the space between tensions.

Prior to discussing each of these aspects of the other, I want to recognise that there is a change in orientation, a change in disposition, as one moves from listening for wisdom and inspiration to speaking as a political act. For the former, the ‘I’ receives the other, is subject to the other, and is bound to listening by duty. For the latter, one must engage in the act of *subjectification* (Biesta, 2011; Rancière, 2013); that is, one must work to make sense of space between self and other, between *demos* and state. There is a move away from passive reception and toward active engagement. As such, the passivity required for listening contains an aporia with respect to action:

Passivity in the radical sense is therefore a paradoxical notion: it precedes the passivity-activity opposition and functions as necessary condition for activity or agency. It is passive with regard to itself, and thus submits to itself as though it were an exterior power. Hence, radical passivity harbours within itself a potential—a power or enabling force. In this sense, passivity evokes passion—not knowledge, not the rational realization of responsibility but (pre-conscious) passion—what Levinas refers to as “the primordial feeling.” (Hofmeyr, 2007, Radical Passivity: the Impact of the Face section)

The necessity of the ‘I’ as a conscious participant, which is inherent to the necessary tensions within ethics and politics, is at once empowering (I can act) and humbling (I must listen). It is this tension, not simply within the ethical frame and political structure, but between them which must be sustained in order for this framework of ethical politics to function. Thus, even as I introduce the complication of the self as a listener and committed political actor, I must also make the case that every self, every subject, requires engagement

with an other for the realisation of ethics, the enaction of politics, and the building of a common world.

For Levinas (1989), ethics is established as first philosophy: the self is summoned by the other to the duty of listening based on an innate sense of responsibility. This responsibility stems from my very existence, for, as Levinas (1989) notes in “Ethics as First Philosophy”, the mere fact of my existence makes me a killer, complicit in the displacement of another because of the space I inhabit. Levinas (1989) poses the question:

My being-in-the-world or my ‘place in the sun,’ my being at home, have these not also been the usurpation of spaces belonging to the other man whom I have already oppressed or starved, or driven out into a third world; are they not acts of repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing? (p. 82)

It is that in being, living, that I am compelled, as “the unique and chosen one” (Levinas, 1989, p. 84), to be responsible for the other. The face of the other “summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in doing so recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question” (p. 83). I respond to the command through the act of listening. I incline myself in an attitude of humility, which allows the other to appear and to be heard. It is this act that gives me my freedom. Levinas (1989) emphasizes, “responsibility for my neighbour dates from before my freedom in an immemorial past” (p. 84). Gibbs (2000) elaborates the relationship between listening and freedom by stating that “listening, thus, sets me free, free to the infinity of exteriority, responsibility for others” (p. 37). It is a “difficult freedom” rather than an “autonomous freedom” (Eppert, 2000, p. 222); that is, it is not a freedom *from* commitments, but a freedom *to* respond. And here the importance of the necessary tension between I/other and of being subject to the other, once again asserts itself: I cannot free

myself; I am not self-sufficient and unfettered. Instead, my freedom is difficult. It is bound primarily to my responsibility and it is not possible without the other. Any meaning I make, any politics in which I engage, must necessarily stem from my responsibility to the other, and from my freedom to respond.

Rancière (2001) utilises the same sense of structural tension to promote political action rooted in the other. In this case, political action cannot take place within the construct of state. The state comes to represent a body that requires an other in order to persist with the work of democracy: the *demos*, “the part of those who have no part,” (Rancière, 2001, p. 5). Politics inherently possesses a “duality,” which Rancière (2001) describes in the following way:

Let us say that the two-fold body of the people is not a modern consequence of the sacrifice of the sovereign body but rather a given constitutive of politics. It is initially the people, and not the king, that has a double body and this duality is nothing other than the supplement through which politics exists: a supplement to all social (ac)counts and an exception to all logics of domination. (p. 5)

According to this understanding, politics and democracy cannot come from within the state—though it is sometimes falsely created there in the name of God or King. By necessity, politics emerges from without, and is interpreted through the supplementary spaces between the state and the other. Rancière (2001) explains that this supplement, this *demos*, is not a group of others in and of itself, but rather a space created by the distance between the “logics of domination” (p. 5) and those who oppose it. Despite the focus on duality, Rancière (2001) does not collapse those outside of “all social (ac)counts” (p. 5) into a homogenous group. He insists that this *demos* is not a collection of likes, such as the poor

or disadvantaged, but is “the count of the unaccounted-for” (Rancière, 2001, p. 6). These unaccounted may not share concerns about the same issues and may not be estranged from the state in the same ways. For this reason, the *demos* cannot be considered as a group that will act in concert toward achieving the same political ends. Instead, each member of the *demos* becomes an actor, someone who seeks to reconcile his estrangement from the state by interpreting the supplement and by potentially interrupting the extant political infrastructure. It is in this context of many individuals and of duality that the relevance of singularity and individual action once again emerges as speaking.

Arendt (1998) further endorses the importance of the other. She begins by suggesting that others are requisite to the act of politics. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt (1998) notes:

No human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature's wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings. All human activities are conditioned by the fact that men live together, but it is only action that cannot even be imagined outside the society of men. ... Action alone is the exclusive prerogative of man; neither a beast nor a god is capable of it, and only action is entirely dependent upon the constant presence of others. (p. 22-23)

She goes on to describe a political process that requires the presence of others, since the work of politics is rooted in the act of speaking. For Arendt (1998), “to be political, to live in a *polis*, [means] that everything [is] decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence” (p. 26); speaking is a particular “means of persuasion rather than the specifically human way of answering, talking back and measuring up to whatever

happened or was done” (p. 26). This relationship between speaking and acting out politics runs parallel to Rancière’s (2001) conception of politics, as discussed above. It is a form of speaking that requires listening, response, and a shared—albeit limited—understanding of what might be meant by the words one chooses to speak.

It is important to note, however, that Arendt (1998) does not simply advise of the importance of the other for *how* to enact politics; instead, she emphasises the significance of the other when discussing the *content* of political action. Her work helps us to see that the other is needed not only to furnish the reason for action (ethics) or the way to act (politics), but, notably, to provide the goal toward which we move as humans inhabiting the shared spaces: the common world. Arendt (1998) suggests “if the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal men” (p. 55). This is important not simply because it helps people reach into the future, but also because it helps them expand from the past. The common world offers a space that is imbued with permanence, both because it is built on what came before but also because it extends far into the coming generations. It “transcends our life-span into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it” (Arendt, 1998, p. 55). The common world has a historicity and an implied future, and it situates the individual actions of men in both the construct of what is inherited and in the hope for what can come. It is precisely because the common world has existed and should continue to exist that, through cumulative individual action, one can achieve something more permanent or immortal. A political action or event can result in change within one’s lifetime and, importantly, can contribute toward a common world that will last beyond one’s lifetime. This is a powerful argument for individual political acts,

including the creation of a work of interruptive art, because it starkly illuminates the possibilities connected with singular action and provides the actor/artist with hope that whatever he or she creates has the potential to transform his or her world as well as the world to come.

To further cement the connection between the common world and the promise of individual action, Arendt (1998) draws a strong link between natality and the potential within each person for political action and change. She indicates that:

action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities. (Arendt, 1998, p. 9)

Each generation is awake with the possible, with the potential to develop a common world that builds and improves on the one which was inherited from the generation before. If one considers, really considers, the idea that in every human birth there exists the possibility for newness and discovery and revolution, then one cannot help but be hopeful that the cumulative potential of all those human births raises the probability for change.

Finally, in her discussions of the common world, Arendt (1998) recommends a distinction be made between the private needs of men, such as the requirements of the home, family, and personal survival, and the public needs of the common world. Arendt (1998) states that

in the modern world, the social and the political realms are much less distinct. That politics is nothing but a function of society, that action, speech, and thought are

primarily superstructures upon social interest. ... This functionalization makes it impossible to perceive any serious gulf between the two realms; and this is not a matter of a theory or an ideology, since with the rise of society, that is, the rise of the "household" (*oikia*) or of economic activities to the public realm, housekeeping and all matters pertaining formerly to the private sphere of the family have become a 'collective' concern. In the modern world, the two realms indeed constantly flow into each other like waves in the never-resting stream of the life process itself. (p. 33)

She suggests that politics should offer the prospect for people to come together to discuss ideas which "transcend the life-span of mortal men" (Arendt, 1998, p. 55) in a "space in which things are saved from destruction by time" (Arendt, 1998, p. 57). This content becomes relevant to discussions of an ethical politics because in being concerned with the immortal, with that which spans beyond one life, a person must consider the needs of the other. One's actions are imbued with a new purpose: what one builds in a lifetime should not merely advance personal wealth, but ought to surpass one's own existence and become part of a larger world. Individual acts of interruption toward change become expressions of self that help "guard against the futility of individual life" (Arendt, 1998, p. 56), giving meaning to a person's existence through hope, through participation in a common world, and through the creation of something which speaks beyond one's own sphere of need. Arendt (1998) also specifies, rather concretely, what the common world ought not to be preoccupied with: the banalities of the private realm, which include monetary gain, status and public admiration. Arendt (1998) emphasises that "while dire necessity made labor indispensable to sustain life, excellence would have been the last thing to expect from it"

(p. 48). For Arendt (1998), the focus on the ephemera of necessity results in a loss of immortality and, by consequence, “worldlessness” (p. 54). In this case, worldlessness is the enemy of an ethical politics because it destroys all considerations of the other through its very focus on the mundane.

To summarise, the ethicopolitical framework I propose is based on Levinasian ethics (1989): the responsibility for the other, the obligation to listen, and the freedom to respond. It is further grounded in Rancièrian (2001) politics, which separates the state from the *demos* and which requires an individual political actor to create democracy through interpretation of supplementary spaces. Finally, it is elaborated by Arendtian (1998) conceptions of politics as the action of speaking. This framework is also given purpose, a rationale, based on Arendt’s (1998) vision for the common world, in defiance of worldlessness. At this juncture, I must also clarify two important points. First, that I am not seeking to wholly reconcile the varied, and sometimes even competing, ideas about ethics and politics that these thinkers discuss. There are numerous conceptual tensions that I do not seek to resolve, as I might if I was attempting an exegetical reading of any one philosopher or theorist; instead, I am finding a way to think alongside certain ideas from Levinas, Rancière, and Arendt to devise one possible framework for an ethical politics. The second point I must make is that although the focus of this work, of the ethicopolitical model itself, creates a tension between the singularity of the individual and the multiplicity of the *demos*, this focus must not be conflated as championing individualism, especially in the neoliberal sense, over sociality. Arendt (1998), of course, recuperates this sociality by noting that political acts of speaking must be enacted toward a common world. In Levinas, ‘I’ who listens may be neither abstract nor universal (Lash, 1996), but this ‘I’ recovers a

sociality—a multiplicity—in an interaction with the other that maintains complete alterity and preserves secrecy. Levinas (2011) determines that “in order that multiplicity be maintained, the relation proceeding from me to the Other—the attitude of one person with regard to another—must be stronger than the formal signification of conjunction” (p. 120-121) and that to foreclose this secrecy is to collapse the spaces of infinity into totality. The singular action of *subjectification* requisite to Rancière’s conception of politics is not about self-interest, but about the actor gaining recognition and thereby enlarging the public sphere. Rancière (2006) elucidates this point by stating that “far from being the form of life of individuals dedicated to their private happiness, [democracy] is the process of struggle against ... the distribution of public and private that secures the double domination of the oligarchy in the state and in society” (p. 299). In this way, the tension between the singular and the social is maintained, always with the aim of growing the public sphere, moving toward a common world.

The Perilous Loss of the Common World

Worldlessness, the perilous loss of the common world, is what grounds the rationale for this work. As Hinchman and Hinchman (1984) note, Arendt’s conception of worldlessness was

precipitated by the shocks of mass appropriations of peasant land during the Reformation as well as by the rise of Cartesian dualism and modern science. To say that modern life is “worldless,” then, is to make an existential, not a categorical, judgment about it. It is not just a psychological “feeling” people have which is caused and hence explained by some prior series of events. Rather, it is a shift in

what it means to be, a shift in the underlying experience that we have of human existence. (p. 198)

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt (1998) argues that the common world is under threat. She traces the menace of this impendence to the post-industrial revolution emergence of private needs over public concerns. Arendt (1998) notes that the “rise of the social” (p. 89) has negated the value of individual action in the common world, in favour of behaviour. She suggests that the social is linked to behaviour: that is, conformity, obedience, and the desire to adhere to statistical norms, rather than to act in distinctive ways. This desire for conformity leads to a society in which “action would be an unnecessary luxury, a capricious interference with general laws of behavior, [as] if men were endlessly reproducible repetitions of the same model, whose nature or essence was the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing” (Arendt, 1998, p. 8). The risks of basing a society on the value of conformity are twofold. First, the probability of despotism is greatly increased: “large numbers of people, crowded together, develop an almost irresistible inclination toward despotism, be this the despotism of a person or of majority rule” (Arendt, 1998, p. 43). Second, the exception of excellence is smothered by norms: “society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to ‘normalize’ its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement” (Arendt, 1998, p. 40). The focus on behaviour results in a lack of motivation for singular action and reduces the powers of such action by suggesting a majority is needed to bring about societal change.

Arendt (1998) also rejects the intrusion of the needs of the individual—that is the basics of survival—into the public sphere because such an “unnatural growth ... of the

natural” (p. 47) means that people became preoccupied with “a way to sustain their own lives and those of their families” (p. 46) and lose a sense of personal responsibility for the other. She notes that the focus on the menial aims of nourishment, working, and providing for a family, increase “the enjoyment and consumption of the things of the world” (p. 55-56) but result, simultaneously, in a kind of impermanence or worldlessness. The purpose of life becomes the pursuit of transient pleasures, such as public admiration and monetary reward; nothing remains immortal and no higher ideals are espoused from one generation to the next.

I attribute the current state of worldlessness to three factors, all of which fall under the category of ‘loss of the other’; the ethicopolitical framework I propose focuses explicitly on the restoration of those three factors. First, I contend that worldlessness has resulted from the rejection of an ethics that is based on a person’s fundamental responsibility to others. This translates into a move away from Levinasian listening and meaning-making (discussed in further depth in chapter 4), and a move toward absolute knowledge and the *bonne conscience* (Levinas, 1989). The second factor is the complete subsumption of the public good by the unquellable needs and desires of the private realm (Arendt, 1998). This results in a focus on behaviour over action and a shortsightedness that imperils the future world. The third factor is the inability to see ourselves in any kind of relief from the dominant hegemony of the day, which leads to a certain kind of obedience or paralysis. We cannot create any kind of critical distance between our selves and the world we inhabit and are subjects of the dominant rhetoric, making it difficult to believe in change or create visions of transformation. This, in a Ranciorean (2001) context, is

essentially a failure of our senses, a failure of the sensible, a failure of our ability to repartition the sensible world.

The loss of the other as manifest in contemporary politics has led to an ongoing, paralytic sense of worldlessness. For the remainder of this chapter, I discuss examples of worldlessness, drawing particular ties to the three factors named above. For the loss of an ethics based on the other, I begin with a consideration of studies of post 9/11 mourning and the media, using Butler (2002, 2006), Engle (2007), and Frosh (2002). For examples of how the private needs of individuals have been prioritised at the expense of a common world, I continue to explore the post 9/11 era, using Giroux (2005), Butler (2002), and Owens (2004). Finally, for a loss of the ability to repartition the world and the failure of the sensible, I use Ruez's (2012) study of the post 9/11 construction of an Islamic community centre in New York. I have selected these examples because they clearly throw into relief the issues at stake in the loss of the common world. The cases also highlight the necessity for change, both as part of the natural momentum of the human condition and as a means for transforming spaces of oppression and inequality, of worldlessness, into a common world.

The 'Salve of Elucidation': Worldlessness and the Loss of the Other

What does it mean to be responsible for an other? What can an ethics founded on the other bring to the fore? And what does it mean if, in our desire for excellence, democracy, and justice, we turn away from the other? I contend that the current state of worldlessness has been precipitated by a rejection of our fundamental responsibility to the other. We have become so certain of knowledge, that we have lost the impetus to listen and

make meaning. And so it follows, rather endlessly: knowledge breeds certainty; certainty breeds contempt for tenuousness; and success becomes about the mastery of knowledge with conviction. A terrible inward spiral, a trap, not resulting in the growth of consciousness as Levinas (2011) would have preferred, but in a reduction of who and what count as meaningful in the world.

One example of how knowledge and certainty work together to reduce the likelihood that we will ever consider ourselves responsible in an *a priori* way to the other is found in post 9/11 studies of mourning. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Butler (2006) comments:

When we consider the ordinary ways we think about humanization and dehumanization, we find the assumption that those who gain representation, especially self-representation, have a better chance of being humanized, and those who have no chance to represent themselves run a greater risk of being treated as less than human, regarded as less than human, or indeed, not regarded at all.

(p. 141)

The lack of representation, the lack of ability to face (or even of ability to perceive the face of the other) is what begins the troubling trend of closure. We use representations of the other as a means of shutting down, of knowing completely, of presuming to understand. We apathetically rely on general and prevailing interpretations of the other, using common representations as evidence of surety. We tend to see the other as a foregone conclusion of circumstance, of a set of experiences we pretend to collectively understand. This sense of knowing breeds evasion of responsibility. If I *know* that the other is morally corrupt, a terrorist, an enemy of the state, I do not feel any sense of urgency to listen or to make

meaning on my own. I can turn away, secure in the conceit of my certainty; I am not responsible for this broken or corrupt other. I know him. I understand her. She has nothing new to teach me, and so I am absolved from the arduous task of listening.

In the wake of 9/11, studies of mass media and the arts have found that representations of American loss (read as white, American loss) combined with depictions that vilified Muslims (Frosh, 2002) produce a certain kind of apathy in the face of death (Butler, 2002, 2006; Engle, 2007). Coverage in major news outlets capitalised on nostalgia and promised “readers the salve of elucidation” by drawing on images of traditional Americana (such as the work of Norman Rockwell) to present themselves as “the path to understanding” (Engle, 2007, p. 67). The loss of Muslim life, the actual death of the other, lost its ability to touch us. We mourned only for those who we *knew* to be good, and we relied on the knowledge claims of mass media to bolster our self-righteousness.

But there are other possibilities for mourning that do not foreclose the alterity of the other. Using Levinas, Butler (2006) determined that loss and mourning could potentially unite people on the basis of a mutual vulnerability to loss, as “loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure” (p. 20). It is a slightly different, more corporeal, take on the mortality claims made by Levinas (1989) who insists on *a priori* responsibility based on the other, not because of shared vulnerability, but because of the “fear for all the violence and murder my existing might generate, in spite of its conscious and intentional innocence” (p. 82). Despite this difference, Butler (2006) underscores the importance of the relation with the other as the basis of her analysis on how to reframe questions about justice and loss, and how to move

away from violence and toward more sustainable forms of global discourse. As with Levinas, Butler's (2002) solution to the worldlessness wrought of claims to knowledge, certainty, selfishness—and their bedfellows hate, prejudice and violence—is “hearing beyond what we are able to hear” (p. 67). Listening with humility and vulnerability becomes a key ingredient in the remedy for worldlessness.

A Vanishing Table: Worldlessness and the Proliferation of Private Needs

A further expression of worldlessness occurs when private concerns surpass public needs to displace our sense of responsibility for the other. When, as Arendt (1998) observes, the private needs of the individual household come to be the primary focus of politics and of life as a whole, then the needs and wants of the individual are placed in a position of primacy; the requirement of a common world becomes secondary or even inconsequential, thereby engendering an ever-deepening sense of worldlessness. The worldlessness Arendt (1998) describes is fed by the growing realm of the private, which “does not constitute a public realm, but, on the contrary, means only that the public realm has almost completely receded” (p. 52). This clash between the public and the private, between what is good for the household of one and what is necessary for a common world, was also evident post 9/11. Giroux (2005) states that after 9/11 “the space of shared responsibility has given way to the space of shared fears; the obligations of citizenship are reduced to the imperatives of consumerism and the public sphere is emptied of all substantive content” (p. 214). The public domain is vacuous; it has been emptied of action and only a sense of fear pervades. This fear arises entirely from private concerns with mortality and safety. In framing the trauma of 9/11, Butler (2002) notes that:

In the U.S., we start the story by invoking a first-person narrative point of view, and tell what happened on September 11th. And it is that date, and the unexpected and fully terribly experience of violence that propels the narrative. . . . We have to shore up the first-person point of view, and preclude from the telling accounts that might involve a decentering of the narrative 'I' within the international political domain. (p. 58)

The pain and the horror of the events of 9/11 became issues of public consideration and consternation. The private emotions of fear, pain, and love became central to the political response.

Without public spaces for politics, there exists no fabric which knits the community together. Arendt (1998) uses the metaphor of a table to explain that:

To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time. The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them. The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic seance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible. (p. 52-53)

The lack of a tangible common world and the clamour of voices aching to broadcast, share, and in many ways kill the emotions of private experience has left us with little room for acting out a politics of concern and responsibility. We talk over one another in an effort to make our private experiences real in the world; we step on one another's toes in order to advance our own world view because we do not fundamentally believe in the value of the common.

Owens' (2004) work on post-9/11 xenophilia and humanitarianism makes the claim that the Americans' focus on "psychological, intimate selves" has resulted in a belly-gazing political paralysis. Using the US humanitarian missions in Kosovo and post-9/11 interventions in the Middle East as a backdrop, Owens (2004) suggests that empathy actually springs from a sense of claiming the other as a known entity, collapsing alterity, and presuming that one model (in these examples, the US model of multiculturalism and its commensurate myth of class mobility) is best for all. Owens (2004) also finds that the "private world of introspection" leads to an "obsessive concern for self" (p. 296). For Owens (2004), just as for Butler (2002), Giroux (2005), and Arendt (1998), the "subjective, private experience indicative of liberalism's economic man" means that individuals "lose a sense of belonging, being at home in, and care for the world" (p. 296). The range of studies notwithstanding, each of the aforementioned scholars makes the same claim: that the collapse of the private into the public has led to worldlessness: the vanishing of the table, the disengagement of the citizenry from one another, and the inability to act in the face of a dominant discourse based in shared feeling and behaviour.

Collapsing Spaces: Worldlessness and a Failure of the Partition of the Sensible

A common world is built on finding spaces for plurality, dissent, and action, and is concerned not just with the immediacy of the present but also with the possibility of future generations; the police or state is primarily concerned with maintaining its inherent power, seeking to collapse the space for dissent between state and *demos*, suffocating the potential for perceiving difference. If everyone feels and behaves as one, if introspection has led to an obsessive concern for self and a congruent belief in the primacy of knowledge over meaning, then it becomes a task of nearly insurmountable effort to try to perceive the spaces between self and other, between state and *demos*. Politics, in the Rancierean sense, cannot be enacted if the space between state and *demos* is not perceptible or has collapsed—that is, if everyone who participates in the discussion shares the same values and beliefs (usually those of the dominant hegemony). An example of this failure of the sensible is found in Ruez’s (2012) study of the debates about the post 9/11 construction of an Islamic community centre, Park 51, in New York.

Ruez (2012) determines that despite holding opposing points of view about whether the community centre should be built in the vicinity of the World Trade Center (WTC) site, opponents and supporters shared “similar ways of ordering space, perceiving problems, and understanding arguments” (p. 1129). For instance, both opponents and proponents of the Mosque seemed to rely on the overarching belief that America represents freedom and tolerance:

Opponents of Park 51 claimed to be attempting to defend American values from the looming threat of “Islamic fundamentalism,” the imposition of Sharia law, and other such perceived dangers. Perhaps more surprisingly, even proponents of the

project—many of whom make their arguments on the basis of defending American values of freedom or tolerance—tended toward reinforcing a particular partition of the sensible in which the United States is assigned an exceptional place that works to make its imperialist engagements in places like Iraq and Afghanistan sensible. (Ruez, 2012, p. 1133)

The discussion never entered the realm of politics because it never really fractured or “jolted [the police order] out of its ‘natural logic’” (Rancière, 1999, p. 31). Underlying each of the debates was an unshakeable tendency to conform to the existing, sensible order. The rhetoric from the Mayor, the President, Imams, and journalists on both sides of the issue mirrored the belief that the United States is an exemplar of tolerance and freedom.

Ruez (2012) offers a further example of a failure of the partition of the sensible, noting that both, those who were in favour of and those who were against the project, argued about the proximity of a mosque to the WTC site. Some opponents argued that the relative proximity of Park 51 to the WTC was an issue, while proponents drew attention to the numerous other features of the neighbourhood that could be considered inappropriate for a site of mourning and memorial, such as a Burger King, a strip club, and tourist shops. It is evident that the participants in the debate had failed to perceive the question of *why* it was considered inappropriate for a mosque, or any other representative of the Islamic faith, to be located close to the WTC site. As Ruez (2012) points out, “rather than directly challenging the idea that proximity to the WTC site should have anything to do with the location of an Islamic community center, attempts to maximize or relativize the distance risk [left] unchallenged the idea that Muslim spaces do not belong at or near the WTC site”

(p. 1136). They debated from two sides of a shared coin, never bothering to consider more broadly the problems of parameter, framing, inclusion and assumption.

The danger for the common world of this type of “debate” is that it provides a false sense of plurality, democracy and freedom. In discussions leading up to the decision about whether the mosque should be constructed, there was no real plurality because those who were embroiled in the argument failed to truly repartition the sensible. The dominant discourse about America’s values of tolerance and freedom pervaded both sides of the discussion as a given and remained unperturbed for the duration. Also, the exchanges between opponents and proponents offered illusions of democracy by suggesting that multiple perspectives were considered. But if we accept Rancière’s suggestion that democracy exists only in moments of interpretation, and only in the supplementary spaces between self and state, then it is clear that no acts of democracy were taking place in the Park 51 context. The majority of the discussions, and certainly those held by influential stakeholders such as the President and the Imams, made use of the dominant discourse, drawing on themes of tolerance and freedom—drawing on those values “associated with ‘being a New Yorker’” (Ruez, 2012, p. 1133). These debates occurred from within the safety and confinement of the borders of the state and between those who were permitted a voice. Smelser (2004) observed, “[after 9/11] all relevant groups rallied to the support of the nation, and even Muslim Americans were silently supportive or silent if critical” (p. 280). In this sense, during the time of the Park 51 discussions, there was still some question as to whether it was appropriate for Muslims to speak about 9/11 at all. For these reasons, the arguments that were raised in favour of or in opposition to the mosque did not interrupt or jolt assumptions of the police order out of place, and never provided an occasion for a

Rancierean politics to emerge. Finally, and very much in contradiction with the professed value of freedom, there was no real freedom in the debate. If we return to the assertion that freedom “has as its real content the rupture of the axioms of domination” (Rancière, 2001, Thesis 4 section), then participants in a debate which is entirely bounded by those axioms can never proclaim themselves free, and those who might have challenged the dominant discourse will not be heard, will be drowned out, or will fail to see the space between what is being discussed and the restrictions of the frame.

Because worldlessness leaves us only with the desire to conform, to behave, and to know, there are fewer and fewer voices who can perceive the space between self and state, and who feel compelled to interrupt from the *demos*. The attack on the sensible falters and the subsequent repartitioning declines. We are left with an ever-narrowing set of frames for what counts. And these mounting constrictions offer only the illusion or pretence of freedom to move only within borders. In this sense, worldlessness begets worldlessness. Those who are within the state may pretend to construct debates or discuss issues, but they actually work to reify the discourse; meanwhile, as long as the measures of what is discussed and who is allowed to speak are enforced, true challenges from the *demos* will go unwitnessed, unrepresented, and will fall on an increasingly wide circle of deaf ears.

CHAPTER 2

ART AS OTHER

Arendt (1994) contends that “understanding ... is an unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality, that is try to be at home in the world” (p. 307-308). In the previous section, I made my argument for an ethicopolitical framework based on the importance of the other, incorporating elements from Levinas, Rancière, and Arendt. In this section, I put forth the idea that in bringing about an alternate framework for politics and in endeavouring to build a common world, one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal is art². It is important to note that while I hereafter use the arts as a possibility for expressing the ethicopolitical framework I propagate, the fruition of this process is not limited to art. I choose to demonstrate the potential of this framework because, in lieu of face to face interaction, and from the spaces outside the state, art can be made available to all people. It is, perhaps, one of the more easily accessible means of expression available to a person, whether political or otherwise, and it comprises an inherent sense of space created by duality: for every work of art that is shared with an other, there is a prospective distance for the interaction between creator and interpreter.

² When I refer to “art” or “the arts” throughout the study, I am using the term to denote all forms of art, including visual art, music, film and theatre, dance, and literature. There are, however, moments in the discussion when I concentrate more on one art form over others. This occurs during discussions of Levinas (1989; 2011) and the image, when I focus mostly on the visual arts.

To situate art's ethicopolitical potential, I acknowledge that there exists a wide body of literature which examines the general question of how art can be used in political contexts. While some aspects of these arguments can be mobilised in favour of drawing the connections between art and the ethicopolitical framework I posit, it is in a less pointed way than by working with Arendt, Levinas and Rancière directly. For example, Adams (2002) uses a wide breadth of scholars to make an overarching case for art's political power: first, that "social movements use the medium of artistic expression for communicating with the larger society ... and for communicating internally"; second, that "art can help mobilize protest"; third, that "art is useful to movements because it keeps people active in and committed to a movement once they have already joined"; fourth, that "art and music are important in generating resources, both financial resources ... and outside support for movements"; fifth, that "a movement's music prolongs a movement's impact after the movement is over by diffusing into the broader culture and changing popular mores and tastes"; and sixth, that "art can stir up emotions that are useful to movements in several of the above ways" (p. 27-28). Each of her points broadly defends the use of art in political contexts, but not all of them are simpatico with the possibilities for art as illuminated by the framework I use. For example, in support of her first point, Adams references Eyerman and Jamison's (1998) work, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilising Traditions in the Twentieth Century*. Yet this is a study which focuses on art's ability to mobilise the traditions of a culture rather than interrupt them. Her third point, that art can maintain a group's commitment to a movement (or a hegemony) is: at best, irrelevant to my position that art can lead to change through individual acts; at worst, incompatible with the framework's most basic assertion that we must not collapse spaces between I/other to

construct new hegemonies. Her fourth point is also immaterial: further along in this study, I will show that art for the political does not always require funding or conventional means of support in order to find audience or to reach toward the future in search of change. I gesture to Adams' work simply to illustrate that while a great body of literature exists studying art and politics, or political art, not all of it will intimately or comprehensively connect with the ethicopolitical framework I have discussed.

For art to be considered a useful vehicle for advancing an ethics and politics toward democracy, I focus on the necessary tensions inherent to the ethical and political writings of Levinas, Arendt, and Rancière. I turn to several analyses of Levinas' philosophy to suggest that art can stand in the stead of face to face interaction, though not wholly or imperfectly, to offer a representation of the 'face' of the other. I employ Arendt (1998) to describe how the creation of art can be considered a political act, though it may well be proposed outside the official structures of power in the *polis* or state. And I conclude with how art can interrupt the discourses of dominant interests to repartition what is sensible, in a Ranciéan (2013) way.

Art and Levinas

The tension of space between the artist and the audience can mimic the positions of the speaker and the listener in Levinas' work, though Levinas has been read for and against art as other (Eppert, 2008; Iyer, 2001; Kenaan, 2011; Staehler, 2010). In some of his work (e.g., "Reality and its Shadow" [1989] and *Totality and Infinity* [2011]), Levinas seems to turn away from art, criticising it for failing to truly illuminate the absolute unknowability of the other and for totalising, collapsing, the other's alterity. Staehler (2010) notes that

Levinas criticizes art for “[lacking] the immediacy of the ethical encounter with the Other,” suggesting that “by way of its sensuous nature, it diverts us from our ethical responsibility, and by way of its multiple meanings and layers it provides a possibility for evasion” (p. 124). In other work, however, Levinas turns toward art, particularly the poetic imagination, acknowledging that art does have some power to ‘face’ in lieu of in-person dialogic interactions³. Levinas’ essays on Paul Celan and Jean Atlan reflect some of the ambiguity in his position on art as other (Staehler, 2010); in the former, he suggests that “the poem goes toward the other” (Levinas as cited in Staehler, 2010, p.123) and in the latter “he takes [the artist, Atlan] to be part of an endeavour akin to his ethical philosophy” (Staehler, 2010, p. 124). Eppert (2008) echoes the finding that Levinas’ writings on art present ambivalence, if not outright tension. She determines that while Levinas criticises art for “participating in [the] sphere of non-truth,” pretending toward knowledge and evading the demands of ethical responsibility (Eppert, 2008, p. 72), he also opens the conversation for art as ethical when considered alongside criticism and in several reflections on artists such as Celan, Blanchot and Dostoyevsky.

I adopt the position that while art has the capacity to be read as totalising, in that it fails to wholly reflect the entirety of alterity, it can nevertheless be a significant tool for enacting an ethical politics toward a common world. I would further argue that it is precisely because art contains the risk of being perceived with the pitfall of closure or finality that it ought to be addressed directly. In concurrence with Robbins (1999; 2005) and Kearney (1995; 1999), I contend that Levinas leaves room for art to be considered as

³ In these examples of Levinas turning toward art as other, it is important to note that he seems to maintain his suspicion of the image as a representative of a totality, preferring examples of language-based art, such as poetry, instead.

other and for it to be read towards an ethics of responsibility. Kearney (1995) determines, “Levinas’ suspicion of images is not directed against the poetic power of imagination per se but against the use of such power to incarcerate the self in a blind alley of self-reflecting mirrors” (p. 110). It can be said, then, that Levinas’ primary objection to art is that it can be claimed as knowledge, foreclosing possibilities for further exploration of the other. Yet, Levinas sometimes “[betrays] exceptions to his rule” and “[blurs] generic boundaries and hierarchies”; he “gestures toward the opening function of art—that is, art’s capacity to open the reader to the ethical” (Eppert, 2008, p. 73). It is this opening which is most interesting to me, as I seek to also establish how art can undo, can invite, and can speak. Art can ‘face’ us because it obliges us to interpret and to come up short; it forces us to recognise that we will never completely know or understand the purpose of the work, nor the intent of the artist. Llewellyn (2008) helps elucidate the correspondence between the Levinasian act of facing and the possibilities for art as a face in the following way:

When Levinas writes that ‘This [ethical] responsibility would be called upon and awakened by the face of the other man’, he tells us that a distinction must be made between the visibility of the phenomenal face at which I look and the invisibility of the ethical face that looks at me. Now if this distinction is made with respect to the moment when the other is before me in flesh and bone, should it not be made with respect to the moment when I am confronted by his portrait? (p. 172)

Llewellyn also, helpfully, notes that the other—the paravisual other—is always outside my grasp. This permanent outsideness is what renders Levinasian ethics beyond the constraint of phenomenology (Gibbs, 2000); the overflow and excess are as true for the physical manifestation of the face of the other as they are for works of art which represent the other.

This idea of overflow, of exceeding the boundaries of the physical or the plastic, is also evident when one distinguishes between poetic imagination and art as a relic, or an object of closure. Kearney (1995) finds that Levinas recovers the possibilities of art in his studies of Leiris, Celan, Jabes, Blanchot and others, by acknowledging that “the exercise of a poetic imagination open to conversation with the other ... is already one that allows the face to break through the plastic form of the image which represents or intends it” (p. 15). The poetic imagination, loosed from the restrictions of the immediately perceptible, offers us traces of the possible: an envisioning of what may be in the face of what is. When speaking of poetry, and of the connections between imaginative labours and social reality, Freeman (1999) suggests that Levinas helps situate art, not as a product of social construction nor of an autonomous agent, but in the spaces in between: the places of relatedness between self and other. Freeman (1999) states that

poetic creation, among other forms of imaginative labor, has relationship—or, maybe more appropriately, *relatedness*—at its very heart. I say “relatedness” here in order to emphasize the significance not just of others, people with whom we are “in” relationship or dialogue, but of the Other, whose presence commands a kind of attention and care that surpasses the condition of “being-in” or “being-with” implicit in the ideas of relationship or dialogue as ordinarily conceived. (p. 105)

These manifestations of the poetic imagination force us to listen, with humility and in apology for our lack of consciousness, to the words, thoughts, dreams in picture or motion or song, of others who we may never meet in person, but who nonetheless have the capacity to move us beyond the sphere of our current awareness and ambition. And what is poetic imagination if not one person’s attempt at recognising and envisioning all that which lies

beyond their current consciousness, that which may exceed their sensibilities? This tension between what is and what can be is precisely what imagination expressed as art can celebrate. When discussing poetry, Heaney (1995) determines that art and imagination invite the balance between “a reality which may be only imagined but which nevertheless has weight because it is imagined within the gravitational pull of the actual and can therefore hold its own and balance out against the historical situation” and “a glimpsed alternative, a revelation of potential that is denied or constantly threatened by circumstances” (p. 3-4). Through this delicate space of between and relatedness, art obliges us to face what is subjective with humility and with an openness that we often find troubling or difficult when ideas are presented as fact. It is for this reason that art can help us begin in two ways: to understand the world around us through exposure to and appreciation of art; also, to act in political ways, by creating art and by responding to it in ways that exceed mere aesthetics or academic study.

In this work, I am concerned with how, through our face to face interactions with the other, we can be inspired to create art—a response to the awesome spaces of the infinity of exteriority; also, I suggest that, despite Levinas’ ambiguity about the ability of art to ‘face,’ art has the power to exceed our current consciousness. Art is not a replacement for the face of the other. Rather, the interactions we have with the other can stimulate the creative process, and the creation and interpretation of art can interrupt our *bonne conscience* (a concept I will discuss in detail in chapter 4), forcing us outside our selves, forcing us to acknowledge the limits of our knowledge, and exposing us to the possibilities of the new.

Art and Arendt

It is this promise for newness and beginning which is echoed in Arendt's (1998) proposal of natality. As previously noted, Arendt's concept of natality reveals a connection between birth and action. Thus, the birth of an idea, the creative impetus, the poetic imagination, may lead to action: the creation of art that works to disrupt norms and behaviours. It may also be that art which interrupts, which is not mimetic but natalist, inspires political action by opening the self to the possibilities proposed by the other. As with Levinas, some of Arendt's (1998) writings on art in *The Human Condition* do not lend themselves completely to the supposition that art can represent or inspire action. Arendt (1998) is critical of art because she suggests that art reduces the "the living flux of acting and speaking," reifying it "through a kind of repetition, ... imitation or *mimesis*" (p. 187). But Mack (2012) demonstrates that literature and poetry (and, I extrapolate, the other arts, too) can exceed mimesis and can orient themselves more closely with the birth of something new. He provides accounts of literature that is "not premised so much on traditional understandings of mimesis (either as mirror or as lamp) as on the principle of birth or natality" (Mack, 2012, p. 103). That art can surpass its ability to reflect or shine a light on the dominant discourse, that it can break from conformity, is central to my argument that art can interrupt and can begin something anew. It is this aspect of newness which is most exciting and relevant when discussing art as a tool for or as a manifestation of political action.

For this reason art can not only provide a sense of beginning, but also engender a feeling of hope. Arendt (1998) explicitly draws this connection between natality and hopefulness by stating that natality "bestows upon human affairs faith and hope, those two

essential characteristics of human existence” (p. 322). She also paints a rather dour picture of a world in which the provision for newness through individual action is absent:

If without action and speech, without the articulation of natality, we would be doomed to swing forever in the ever-recurring cycle of becoming, then without the faculty to undo what we have done and to control at least partially the processes we have let loose, we would be the victims of an automatic necessity bearing all the marks of the inexorable laws which, according to the natural sciences before our time, were supposed to constitute the outstanding characteristic of natural processes.

(Arendt, 1998, p. 246)

Here, Arendt gives us a potential argument for art as an act of interruption: she notes that the opposite of natality is reification, the submission of self to the ‘inexorable laws’ of nature. And so it is that in order for there to be anything new in the world of art, it must be born of something other than what already existed in the past. By the very nature of the changes to form and content that have emerged over the ages, and as evidenced in the examples cited by Mack (2012), we can see that art must embody some potential for newness; that some art, if not all, must indeed break from the traditions of the past in order to forge a new way of seeing, doing, or being.

It is important to note that Arendt is not, through the idea of natality, promising solutions or outcomes; rather, crucially, she is gesturing to the potential for changes not yet conceived of by humanity. Put another way, one could say that Arendt is offering “an alternative to accounts of hope that focus on wish fulfillment” (McDonald & Stephenson, 2010, p. 31). This distinction between the promise of an outcome and the potential for transformation also strengthens the connection between the acts of inspiration and creation,

and natality. Art can gesture toward the possible despite the sometimes rigid constraints of oppression and violence that can make other forms of overt political action difficult. Also, art as action does not have to achieve an end in order to forge freedom; instead freedom is won through the very performance of an act (Arendt, 1998; Kanellopoulos, 2007). If action requires space, the “web of human relationships” (Arendt, 1998, p. 183), and the “subjective world of in-between” (Kanellopoulos, 2007, p. 102), then art is one of the tools that can effectively and powerfully navigate that space. Kanellopoulos (2007) lays out this connection between art, space, action and freedom quite lucidly as he makes an argument for musical improvisation as a form of Arendtian political action. He notes that while Arendt offers both art and science as examples of endeavours within which people might realize their potential for freedom, she is fundamentally concerned “with those activities that traditionally, as well as according to current opinion, are within the range of every human being” (Arendt, 1998, p. 5). Because we are “free to make new beginnings” (Kanellopoulos, 2007, p. 102), Kanellopoulos argues that Arendt’s idea of natality opens the door for expression and performance. Everyone is born with the potential to begin, to act, and, as noted above, the creation of art can itself be considered political action because action does not have fulfilment as its requisite. Art, as a product of creativity and imagination, enlivens the sense of what is possible beyond the confines of what is known, and it is this promise for newness through the action of creation, that emerges most strongly in the favour of art in Arendt’s work.

Art and Rancière

Much has been written on the possibilities for the repartition of the sensible through art (Boano & Kelling, 2013; Rancière, 2013; Wright, 2008). Rancière's theories, more strongly than either those of Levinas or Arendt, lend themselves to the argument for art as a political act. Because interruptive art does not rely on an established political or dominant hegemonic order to find an audience, it suggests an equality of access that offers citizens the chance to engage, protest, and establish a voice outside the common political hierarchy. This concept of 'equality of access' finds congruence with Rancière's conception of "active equality," which fosters a sense of potentiality, since it focuses not on the elite and their obligations, but rather speaks to the *demos* of its possibilities (May, 2008b). For Rancière, political subjects are not passively inserted into an established order, and cannot be educated into existence through a prescribed curriculum; instead, they actively come into existence through the creation of "*new* ways of doing and being" (Biesta, 2011, p. 150). It is precisely for this reason that Rancière (1992) defines politics as the "process of emancipation" (p. 59). Through this process, people are restored a sense of purposefulness and hope that is born of empowerment. In discussing Rancière's idea of active equality, May (2008b) notes:

What a democratic politics offers us is the one thing the police order forbids, the single most threatening possibility facing the continuation of any order of inequality: hope. It is a hope that is not given to us. ... Rather, it is a hope that remains for us to create. What the voice of democratic politics tells us is not *Here is your hope*. It is that *We are not barred from hope*. It is not there before us, in a

place that already exists, awaiting our grasp. This is not because it cannot exist. It does not exist, but it can be made. (p. 144)

To take up the idea that something can be made, can be brought into the “sensible world” (Rancière, 2003, p. 226), one can reference Rancière’s process of *subjectification*.

Subjectification is a vision for political action that is grounded in the creation of new spaces on a common stage where one can appear. There exists no template, no “particularly stable form” (Biesta, 2011, p. 150) for democratic politics, because each political action is based on the unique subjectivity of the citizen. According to this understanding, “democratic politics is not dependent upon the availability of a particular subjectivity but rather generates new political subjectivities” (Biesta, 2011, p. 149). One does not need to subscribe to a particular dogma or political philosophy, one does not have to join an existing political party or strive for change by voting. Instead, a political subject “extracts itself from the dominant categories of identification and classification” with the goal of “treating a wrong and attempting to implement equality” (Rancière, 2013, p. 97). This is the very essence of artistic creation: to believe that one has enough power to bring something into the world that is new, with the potential to right a wrong or promote equality; to confront the existing order with the possibility (indeed, probability) of its own fallibility.

As an artist uses his or her art to extend across supplementary spaces and create new subjectivities, so too can the viewer or audience make connections. Rancière (2007) suggests that art can emancipate not only through its production, but through its impact on the audience. He determines that the artist has the capacity to position his or her art from an emancipatory stance: the artist “does not teach *his* knowledge to the students. He commands them to venture forth in the forest, to report what they see, what they think of

what they have seen, to verify it, and so on” (Rancière, 2007, p. 275). The artist is not a master of knowledge, but works to dismantle the established order. The artist who assumes an emancipatory stance knows that all the constructs of the hegemonic order are the artifice of inequality, and works with the audience to dismantle them. Rancière (2007) determines that the construct of knowledge and state, the oppositions built into the system, such as “looking/knowing, looking/acting, appearance/reality, activity/passivity” (p. 277) are:

much more than logical oppositions. They are what I call a partition of the sensible, a distribution of places and of the capacities or incapacities attached to those places. Put in other terms, they are allegories of inequality. ... Emancipation starts from the opposite principle, the principle of equality. It begins when we dismiss the opposition between looking and acting and understand that the distribution of the visible itself is part of the configuration of domination and subjection. (Rancière, 2007, p. 277)

The audience recognises the space across which the artist speaks, and does not seek to foreclose it using the tools of knowledge or of certainty. Audience members are instead “distant viewers and interpreters of what is performed in front of them ... [who] pay attention to the performance to the extent that they are distant” (Rancière, 2007, p. 277). Here, Rancière gives us a vision of art as a manifestation of newness, always newness, as subjectivities emerge each time art is performed, read, or viewed, as they effloresce within the wondrous distance between I/other.

I aver that it is precisely because art relies on reaching across the spaces between I/other, between the ‘web of relations’ and between the supplementary, that it can be useful for the expression of an ethical politics. Art can interrupt, in much the same way a ‘face’ of

the other can interrupt our *bonne conscience*; art can be a beginning, an expression of one's own potential and natality, that contributes toward the creation of a common world (though, as I discuss below, that iteration of art might not be considered a direct contribution to the common world, in the strictest Arendtian sense); also, art can be seen as congruent with Rancière's concept of 'active equality' because it can be created by anyone, and can help to repartition the sensible by generating new political subjectivities. While art is not the singular manifestation of this ethicopolitical framework, nor is the potential for art in political contexts limited to this framework, it nevertheless contains within the action of its creation and the potential of its reach the capacity to connect between self and other, and between state and *demos*. In these ways, the potential exists for art to sustain the ethicopolitical framework I describe, to exist as action and as inspiration for action, and to interrupt the *status quo*.

CHAPTER 3

WHEN IS ART POLITICAL?

“Begin where you are, think out of your existence, there is no need to hide” (Abbs, 2003, p. 6).

Not all art may be considered, in the Arendtian sense, as a direct contribution to the common world. Yet, while some art may not tangibly add to the common world as a permanent artefact, it can nonetheless contribute to the development of a common world by gesturing toward transformation and democracy. I refer to this type of art as “interruptive art.” I also borrow from Casas (2010), who refrains from categorising such art as “political art,” but instead names it “*art for the political*” (Heuristics of Cultural Resistance section). In this chapter, I clarify what types of artistic expression may be usefully considered as interruptive or political. I also discuss whether medium matters using Arendt’s (1998) distinction between public and private arts, the constraints of interruptive architecture, and the possibilities for photography and documentary.

Thinking About the Interruptive Function of Art

How does one approach the question of what is ‘art for the political’? Or what art is political? It is an especially difficult query if one begins to consider all the many historical and contemporary conversations about the nature of art and, indeed, the overarching question of what is art. Baumann (2007) offers this insight: “What is the definition of art?

This question has been debated by aestheticians for many centuries. The debate has generated a number of definitions, none of which, it turns out, has been free from devastating criticism” (p. 5). For this reason, I do not and will not attempt to offer any kind of categorical analysis of what is art, or even how various arts can be analysed according to diverse and, often competing, theories. After all, the aim of this work is not so much to determine the possible responses to the questions above, as it is to suggest that some art and some artists can indeed be considered political, when political is delineated as speaking for change toward a common world. And so I propose a single hypothesis based on the claims: not all art is political in the time of its creation; and not all artists seek to create work that interrupts the prevailing hegemony and speaks for change. This leaves me with dichotomous ways of thinking about and offering discussions about art: that which may be considered political (i.e., an interruption of the present toward change) by its creator or its audience, and that which may not. Notice that there is an aspect of temporality which cannot be ignored and which I will discuss further below. I will also discuss Arendt’s (1998) distinction between public and private arts, and make a case that her definition of “public art” is incompatible with what I construe as ‘art for the political’.

When Art does not Interrupt, But Conforms

Rancière notes that “art in and of itself is not liberating; it either is or isn’t depending on the type of capacity it sets in motion, on the extent to which its nature is shareable or universalizable” (Carnevale & Kelsey, 2007, para. 6). To move forward with the claim that not all art is considered political or, in Rancière’s words “liberating,” I offer two ways of thinking about examples of art that are created within or perceived as

congruent with the dominant hegemony, that are not interruptions but extensions or elaborations. The first is centred on art that conforms and entertains. The second, on the way in which art that assimilates can be used to inculcate or inform.

Conforming and entertaining. Art which conforms and entertains does not seek to liberate or connect from outside the state, from the *demos*. It engages with the systems and functions within the machinery of the state to produce work that can be consumed for entertainment. In discussing art which conforms and seeks to entertain the masses, Rancière asserts that:

Emancipation can't be expected from forms of art that presuppose the imbecility of the viewer while anticipating their precise effect on that viewer: for example, exhibitions that capitalize on the denunciation of the "society of the spectacle" or of "consumer society"—bugbears that have already been denounced a hundred times—or those that want to make viewers "active" at all costs with the help of various gadgets borrowed from advertising, a desire predicated on the presupposition that the spectator is otherwise necessarily rendered "passive" solely by virtue of his looking. An art is emancipated and emancipating when it renounces the authority of the imposed message, the target audience, and the univocal mode of explicating the world, when, in other words, it stops wanting to emancipate us.

(Rancière, Carnevale & Kelsey, 2007, para. 6)

The renunciation of authority is precisely what is absent from art which conforms. This type of art does not create conflict between what is and what ought to be. It does not interrupt the normalised discourses at work in a society, but observes them, functioning

entirely within the confines of what is considered endogenous to dominant philosophy. The represented subject, as well as the principles of practice by which the work has been created, adhere to what is already accepted by the prevailing zeitgeist. They are consistent with what counts as knowledge. This conventional art may be non-objective or representational, but it emerges from a set of standards that are commonly established and follows a set of guidelines for the medium that are part of an extant body of knowledge. Put more succinctly, it is art that conforms to expectation. It prettifies. Or it expresses emotion directly from the artist to the audience (Danvers, 2006), frequently without commentary about the causes or results of that emotion. Often, this type of art is commissioned for a space, or created, as is the case with many contemporary films and music, to make as much money as possible. Unlike Rancière, I do not categorise these forms of art in a pejorative manner. I do not suggest that this type of art is lesser, or in any way impoverished, when compared with art that fulfils an interruptive purpose; it is not a question of value, so much as it is a question of difference of purpose or artistic intention.

One contemporary example of art that conforms is found when considering the majority of modern, Western moviemaking. Much of Hollywood moviemaking acts as cultural production for dominant Western hegemony, despite the fact that other countries such as India and the Philippines produce more films annually (Scott, 2005); this is because Hollywood is the major source for imported films globally and because it generates the highest revenues for filmmaking worldwide (Scott, 2005, p. 161). While movies can be intellectual as well as aesthetic (Baumann, 2007), and can interrupt, educate, and entertain, a significant segment of Hollywood production has historically been viewed as “light entertainment” (Baumann, 2007, p. 1). While Baumann (2007) is primarily concerned with

tracing the trajectory of that subsection of Hollywood films which can be considered art, and how some American film has come to be considered a viable art form, he also notes that many American films are forms of cultural production that are reliant on the marketplace and point to the importance of the “blockbuster formula” which is often the benchmark of a film’s success. The blockbuster formula uses routine and formulaic production practices. This allows studios to focus, not on the creation of art, but on the generation of profits. Films which are reliant on the marketplace and which use profits as an indicator of success are also subject to having their content altered to suit special interests and sponsors. In the last 25 years (Segrave, 2004), product placement in films has become a standard marketing tool to entice target audiences to purchase a product or service. Segrave (2004) defines product placement as “the deliberate insertion into an entertainment film script of a product, its signage, a verbal mention of a product, and so on, for a consideration” (p. 1); she also notes that whereas the use of product placement was once frowned upon as a “sleazy practice, always hidden, almost never admitted” (p. 1), it is now an openly accepted marketing strategy. Segrave’s (2004) comments are interesting for two reasons: first, for her use of the term ‘entertainment film,’ which suggests that the primary objective of the film is entertainment of the target audience; second, that in recent years there has been an accepted collapse between certain forms of art (such as entertainment films) and economics. The viewer is no longer simply entertained, but is also convinced or sold on a certain lifestyle, set of ideas, or products that represent powerful business interests. Product placement is particularly remarkable because its pervasive use in contemporary Hollywood filmmaking also suggests that certain forms move beyond entertainment, into inculcation.

Conforming, inculcating and informing. Art which conforms can work to inculcate or inform. This iteration of art seeks to establish a kind of knowledge or attempts to concretise a prevailing understanding of the world. It is art that in the present moment of creation reflects the dominant thinking of the powerful and the elite, or that has come through the passage of time to represent a recognised historical event. It works to encourage a certain compliance or traditionalism amongst members of its potential audience. Rancière (2013) might refer to this type of art as mimetic or representative, because it belongs to and propagates the governing regime. It is a part of an “artworld” that is “very policed” (Wright, 2008, para. 8) by those who have amassed power and authority within the state. Because this iteration of art can confirm what counts as knowledge, because it can assume the guise of being educative, it is important to investigate how an audience comes to art, how they view it, and how they make meaning from it. In this regard, Danvers (2006) provides an overview of the relationship between art and knowledge formation:

The primary site of knowledge is within the purposive consciousness which inhabits, or, more correctly, is embodied as a particular physiological entity (my body: your body). Knowledge is externalised in a secondary site comprising the products of human learning – the ‘constructs, messages and markers’ [which the mind/body externalises and presents to others]. ... Included in this externalisation are the bodies of knowledge which constitute the visual arts – paintings, sculpture, films, photographs, installations and performances. (p. 80-81)

Art that fulfills an informative function in society must present to the senses, to the “purposive consciousness” (limited though it may be), the ‘constructs, messages and

markers' that are in keeping with the prevalent rhetoric of society. It seeks to bring forth a coherence or consonance between a person's experiences in the world and a governing system of beliefs.

As noted above, the line between art as entertainment and art for inculcation can be blurred by such practices as product placement. Advertising makes use of the arts as a cultural vehicle to encourage consumerist values (i.e., where ownership and acquisition of material goods is the penultimate goal) and conformity based on the desire to behave according to norms rather than to act as an individual. These consumerist values emerge from the leading hegemony (Rumbo, 2002; Zhao & Belk, 2008) and can even be contrived from seemingly incompatible ideologies⁴. Abbs (2003) states that in modern "global consumer culture" (p. 5), "much contemporary art has become merely an adjunct to media hype and tabloid razzmatazz" (p. 3). The fact that product placement is used in popular culture films, novels and music (Lee & Faber, 2007), and plays (Lehu, 2007) has a further effect on maintaining the dominance of the state because only art which conforms, art which is seen as unthreatening or uncontroversial, receives the funding that comes from marketing. Through a process Segrave (2004) describes as "product displacement" (p. 173), art which interrupts, and is controversial, is less likely to receive the same exposure simply because the budget is not supplemented through advertising.

But is modern consumerism the only evidence of using art to inculcate? Certainly not. I have so far focused on the relationship between certain forms of art and

⁴ Zhao and Belk's (2008) survey of advertising practices in modern China examines China's transition from Communism to a "consumption-oriented society" (p. 233) through the use of advertising. In particular, the authors study how advertising appropriated Communist rhetoric to reach a broad audience.

consumerism, but the selling of ideas has long preceded the sale of product and service. If art that conforms also seeks to inculcate, to establish what is knowledge and what is not, then we must only look to history for certain expressions of religious art to observe examples of how the principal authority shaped the content and form of art to elicit obedience and subservience from its audience. Much of the canon of Western art is comprised of religious art that was inspired and commissioned by religious and state leaders, from the study of Egyptian art representing the divine kingship, to the Gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome, to the emergence of the teachings of the Catholic Church (Kleiner, 2014). In the same vein as advertising revenue can be used to augment profits for and expand the reach of certain forms of art now, the content and form of visual art, architecture, and music were once controlled by wealthy patrons affiliated with the Church (Chanan, 1994; Kleiner, 2014). For example, Chanan (1994) writes that "the Christian church is the bridge between the music of Antiquity and that of modern times" (p. 31) and that "the church [was] the only institution capable of exercising responsibility for the tasks of education, and thus for the formal transmission of culture" (p. 31). Music was composed in concordance with church values (Chanan, 1994), soaring forms of Cathedrals were erected as "glorious images of the City of God" (Kleiner, 2014, p. 365), and the visual arts were employed to tell stories and to teach the masses the many lessons from the Bible.

Medieval works of art have often been cited as "books for the illiterate," teaching the messages of the Christian church to those who could not read conventional texts (Chazelle, 1990) or encouraging devotion amongst churchgoing members (Reiss, 2008). Art was designed in congruence with the values and beliefs of the Christian church during an epoch when the Church wielded an enormous power and influence on the lives of the

people. Dissent in neither form nor content was tolerated and, if perceived as seditious, the artwork might have been destroyed or kept away from public viewing. In discussing the church's pervasive and instrumental control over the development of music, Chanan (1994) notes that the church was determined to eliminate *musica practica* (i.e., music emerging from and representing secular life) by condemning secular singing, censuring pastors and deacons who were considered overly concerned with the quality of their voices, and providing singers deemed suitable by way of their training at the Schola Cantorum in Rome. The same tight measures of control were implemented in the field of visual arts. Artists who did not follow the requirements outlined by patrons could soon find themselves starving and without work. Kleiner (2014) states, “in many times and places, artists had little to say about what form their work would take. They toiled in obscurity, doing the bidding of their *patrons*, those who paid them to do individual works or employed them on a continuing basis” (p. 6). Artists negotiated a complex tightrope between patronage and destitution, and were consistently compelled to choose between conformity (and the comforts of security that patronage could bring) and independence. So it was that form and content were influenced through the church hegemony in much the same way as dominant interests pervade contemporary art: by controlling the majority of funding and by limiting the potential audience for work that does not conform, while flooding society with art that does. By consequence, a great majority of these works echo the values of the dominant hegemony and become persistent reminders of the power residing within the state.

Art that cleaves to contemporary knowledge and values can also furnish important aspects of memorial within a society, and may include historical examples of interruption. Art from the past, which no longer interrupts because it is removed from the context of its

own contemporaneous society, can still be studied for form, content, or for the value it played in its time as a factor toward change. In the study of form, for example, Gothic art is no longer an interruption, as it once was, of classical style; it is not considered “monstrous and barbarous” (Vasari as cited in Kleiner, 2014, p. 365) by contemporary critics, as it was by critics in its time of interruption. Impressionist paintings no longer have the capacity to shock the art world, but are often discussed as examples of a movement which interrupted the definition of what was considered art. Punk rock is no longer an interruption of the limits and definitions of music, but remains an example of how music can be both interruptive and rebellious (Ullestad, 1987). Ullestad (1987) furnishes a clear example of how rock music once interrupted the dominant political structures of the state. He describes how “Sun City”, by Artists United Against Apartheid, was influential in the 1980s as a song with “direct challenges to the system that indicate openings or cracks in the hegemonic structure” (Ullestad, 1987, p. 70). Ullestad (1987) goes on to describe how “Sun City” is “the most immediate example of a rock song that goes against the tide and vigorously stretches the limits of the political space of the dominant culture, rejecting the accepted boundaries of both political and rock discourse” (p. 70). At this stage in history, however, “Sun City” does not exemplify the same power of interruption; instead, it stands as an historical example of the possibilities for interruption through art. It can also stand as a memorial of South Africa’s struggle with apartheid.

In this way, there is an intimate connection between how art from the past can inform as well as memorialise. Commonly, art as memorial is seen through the rigid frame of providing or consolidating knowledge: it “allows us to proclaim a secure relationship to the history under investigation”; it provides “a stable sense of history and memory”; and it

lends us feelings of “sure-footedness and historical certitude” (Maclear, 1999, p. 80). When perceived this way, art from the past adheres to the values of the present because it does not trouble our certainty and because it fails to shatter apart the “closed circle of totality” (Levinas, 2011, p. 171). There exists, however, an alternate possibility of how to consider art from the past that may be useful in probing the question: can historical examples of art interrupt? The response is complex. If art from the past is read for its stabilising influence, to enforce widespread perceptions about historical narratives, then it certainly fails to interrupt. If these cultural artefacts are viewed as measures of consolidation of knowledge, or as “‘mausoleums’ that monumentalize previous civilizations” and “enshrine a hegemonic set of collective values” (Simon, 2006, p. 114), then they become yet another tool for encouraging behaviour over action. It is possible and quite common for art which was once interruptive to become informative. After all, once a new political subjectivity has been raised, it has the potential to extend the boundaries of the state and incorporate new definitions into the political discourse. In this way, one can see that the emergence of Impressionism was an interruption of the then-current conceptions of art, but its primary contemporary purpose is closer to education or even memorial. But there is another possibility to consider. Art from the past can be unpacked to allow other possibilities for meaning making to emerge; in other words, a retrospective analysis of the work or a new curatorial practice might allow a future audience or group of critics to engage in counter-hegemonic readings, even if those readings are at odds with the artist’s original intent. These possibilities will be examined in further depth below and will inform some of the possibilities for art pedagogy in chapter 8.

Failing to Conform: When Art Interrupts

Art is essential to a representative democracy *because* it can be subversive.

Unchallenged and entrenched orders threaten freedom. Art permits individuals to experience alternative worlds, thereby providing an efficient and effective means of testing the status quo without risk. (Hamilton, 1996, p. 76)

Interruptive art, or art for the political (I use the two terms interchangeably), may possess as a secondary feature elements that entertain or inform, but it is distinguished from art which conforms because it does not. Primarily, art which does not conform is designed to interrupt some aspect of the prevailing hegemony. It is “a desiring-machine that is always connected to (and interferes with) larger social-machines” (O’Sullivan, 2010, p. 200). In the following sections, I discuss how art for the political interferes with the machines of the state, even as it sometimes exploits them, with a particular interest in its temporality and functionality.

Interruptive art is compatible with the ethicopolitical framework I advance because it is necessarily of the present and oriented toward the future. The three philosophers and theorists I reference in constructing the framework each make use of the ‘now’ as the significant temporality in their work. Rancière (2001) conceives of political action as a “provisional accident in the history of the forms of domination” (p. 6). He gestures to Jeanne Deroin, the woman who presented herself as a candidate in an election, despite being legally prohibited from running, as an example of political action (Rancière as cited in Biesta, 2011). Rancière interpreted Deroin’s actions as political because they deconstructed, injured, or reconceived of the spaces, allotments, and roles of the state.

Derooin did not have to sustain her action over many years or run a campaign that garnered a large audience over a long period of time. Her single, individual gesture highlighted the inequality in the standing order and, as such, became a significant political action. Rancière (2001) explains that freedom “that constitutes the axiom of democracy has as its real content the rupture of the axioms of domination: a rupture, that is, in the correlation between a capacity for rule and a capacity for being ruled” (p. 4). Rancière (in Carnevale & Kelsey, 2007) also describes the fluidity art and politics assume as political actors speak and connect across the supplementary space: “What interests me more than politics or art is the way the boundaries defining certain practices as artistic or political are drawn and redrawn” (p. 256). It is in this nuanced language describing the fluidity and happenstance of change through accidents, ruptures, and interruptions that one finds evidence of temporality in Rancière’s work. Arendt (1998) also describes political action in the present, wherein the power of “spontaneous action” and “outstanding achievement” (p. 40) provide a natural counterpoint to the apathy produced by “the application of the law of large numbers” (p. 42). Arendt distinguishes between action and behaviour, which can also be dichotomised according to time: behaviour, ostensibly, has to be maintained over long periods in order to be observable and classifiable, whereas action can be executed succinctly. Action does not require statistics or norms in order to exist and to be valid; it does not require that men “unanimously [follow] certain patterns of behaviour” (Arendt, 1998, p. 42). Thus, action illustrates the value of a present which is oriented toward the future and to politics by bringing, once again, to the fore the “meaningfulness of everyday relationships” and “rare deeds” (Arendt, 1998, p. 42). Translated to the arts, the distinction between behaviour and action can be seen as a replication of the distinction between art that conforms and art that

does not: the former, in hindsight, can be generalised into patterns, rules, and themes while the latter stands on its own as a unique call to the other. Levinas' conception of time is less consistent, but can nonetheless be considered for the value of the present. As Chanter (2001) finds,

In his early work there is an attempt to rehabilitate an account of the present, especially in Levinas' appeal to notions such as the instant and hypostasis, that is disproportionate with his later emphasis of an immemorial past and a future that cannot be anticipated. The puzzle would then present itself as to how to reconcile Levinas' early insistence upon the drama or event that the instant signifies for a solitary subject not yet implicated in time, with the later account of a subject who is already responding to a future that comes from beyond, a future commanded by the Other, before whom the subject finds itself answerable for a past that has never been present. (p. 144)

Continuing with the analysis, Chanter (2001) determines that when seen as a response to Heidegger's writings on time, some of Levinas' early thinking can be reconciled with that which came later, so that "the alterity of the past and future is capable of recuperation by a present which thereby proves itself the dominant force" (p. 144). In keeping with this reading, I contend that Levinasian listening can be characterised in the following way: "I listen ... to receive the world *as gift* ... I listen to receive the words ... not as my own possession nor from a discourse of things" (Gibbs, 2000, p. 39-40). This intimates that the act of turning toward the other, which happens in the present, again and again, is what breaks the circle of totality. The gift of this alterity cannot be ascertained in advance or possessed like some tangible relic from the past; nor can it be grasped or mastered to be

mobilised toward a preordained future. In each of these three ways of situating action in the present (though not a present which is exclusive or exempt of history or futurity), interruptive art offers the prospect of bringing into the present a new ‘voice,’ a new set of meanings and a new dream of possibilities for the future.

Danvers (2006) suggests that one of the key functions of art is to build knowledge through the achievement of “coherence and integration” (p. 77), but interruptive art does not count this goal amongst its aims. Instead, the artist or curator seeks, with intention, to intrude into the consciousness of the audience by proposing something that is fundamentally outside of norms and conventions. The artist is offering an alternate way of making meaning, of seeing the world, which is fundamentally of the now and for the future. O’Sullivan (2010) determines, “the operating field of these [artistic] practices is the future, and that the artists operate here as kind of prophets, and specifically *traitor* prophets (traitors to a given affective/signifying regime)” (p. 200). These artists who interrupt, these ‘traitor prophets,’ betray the mores of the present. They believe that actions in an everyday setting, such as the creation of art, are crucial to how we make and shape the world. Roberts (1998) contends that “the ‘everyday’ [is] where the world [is] to be remade” and gives context to this idea by outlining four areas that comprise the “everyday”:

- (1) social agency (the re-hierarchisation of the representation of the everyday: the bringing into representation of the collective power of the working class); (2) new consciousness of time and space (critique of the conflation of the everyday with the actual: redemption of the ‘everyday’ of historical memory for emancipatory work in the present; extension of the cognitive experience of the everyday into the geo-political); (3) dialogism (art as a form of everyday dialogue with the ‘other’:

production of photography/art as a dialectical moment in the transformation of reality); (4) ideological intervention (confrontation with the everyday through ideological deconstruction: photography as a counter-hegemonic theory of interruption; photography as an analytic ‘research programme’ into the problems of everyday life). (p. 36)

It is for all these reasons that interruptive art emerges from the “speculative domain of the imagination” as a way of making meaning, and offers, “representations of what might be the case, what might happen” (Danvers, 2006, p. 87). This type of art functions “against knowledge of the world itself” (p. 87) by reaching outward from the artist’s imagination, borne of his yearning for a better world and for transformation, to offer a vision of the world that is at odds with accepted logics and knowledge. It proposes a challenge to our senses by presenting a ‘face’ of the other, by exceeding our current consciousness, and by generating the possibility for new political subjectivities. It incites belief in the power of singular action ‘everyday,’ in the face of what is otherwise the overwhelming breadth of eternity.

One predictable contention against the power of art to interrupt the “logics of domination” (Rancière, 2001, p. 5) is that without the well-oiled machines of money and power, art might never find its audience. Yet, as Harwood (2014) notes, even when art is managed by the systems within the state, it may still produce critique:

To describe the art market as corporatist means that it deliberately assembles contradictions in order to produce wealth. One such contradiction, noted frequently, is that those artists and scholars who appear to offer the most strident critiques of the prevailing capitalist system are often rewarded most handsomely with both

cultural capital and real financial returns. The myth of autonomy still sells, despite persistent attempts to debunk it. This is not to say that art and its discourses are incapable of confronting objectionable practices. On the contrary, because they are fully embedded in a corporatized market, artworks have the potential to dramatize its machinations in stark, powerful ways. (p. 87)

It is at this point that art can be interruptive even when it is in some way tethered to the dominant zeitgeist. The artist may still be working from the *demos*, though he takes advantage of the mechanisms of the state to make sense of the spaces that exist between himself and the dominant order. Certainly not all interruptive art will emerge from within the state it seeks to transform, but Harwood's commentary provides space for interruptive art, critical art, anarchic art, to emerge and find an audience even if it is funded or supported by controlling interests. The intention of the artist, the curator (if one is involved) and, in the case of art from the past, the audience is crucial to a work of interruptive art. It is the lynchpin which holds the whole argument for interruptive art together: the art must act as a speaker, calling to the viewer or listener, exceeding consciousness, breaking apart the *bonne conscience*, and endeavouring to produce a new political subjectivity which did not previously exist. This disruptive potential can emerge in a variety of ways: art can interrupt by challenging the paradigms of the form; art can interrupt when used as a means of challenging societal norms; art can interrupt the dominant discourse, with a particular focus on the controlling group, government, or state; and art can interrupt the fiction of historical certitude by calling us to witness.

Art interrupting art. The first example of art as interruption occurs when the work disrupts accepted theory about artistic form or content. The interruption works to change what is considered art and also invokes the larger question of how an individual connects to the world. The history of the arts is rife with such interruptions and challenges. I have already gestured to the interruptions generated within visual arts and architecture by noting that Gothic art, initially rejected as “monstrous and barbaric” (Kleiner, 2014, p. 365), challenged classical style. Impressionism disrupted traditional practice of the French government’s Ecole des Beaux-Arts: instead of working to replicate the old masters, Impressionist artists sought to represent modernity by painting ideas or emotions (Galenson & Weinberg, 2001). Impressionism changed not only what was acceptable style and content, but also induced a shift in power in the art world away from peer-based selection and toward a broad range of experts (Wijnberg & Gemser, 2000). No longer was the guild or the peer group of artists responsible for selecting which work would be chosen to hang in museums; instead, the balance of power shifted to curators, dealers and critics, which meant that the focus shifted from maintaining artistic tradition to fostering artistic innovation. Art can also interrupt itself by offering a different way of representing a topic or subject. For example, van Alphen (2005) analyses how artists like Ram Katzir and Zbigniew Libera used children’s colouring books and toys to subvert traditional representations of the Holocaust and to force viewers to re-examine their belief that Holocaust art should teach or be ‘truthful’.

To be sure, these types of interruptions to form and content are not limited to the visual arts. Historically, for many centuries, the church disparaged *musica practica*, which emerged from secular sources (or from the *demos*). Despite the church’s efforts, however,

secular music became the norm. Since then, other interruptions to Western musical form and content have been generated through the surfacing of rock and roll and punk (Ullestad, 1987), jazz (Anderson, 2007), and rap (Martinez, 1997). Literary arts have also evolved and changed over the years, with the rise of the novel and the shift from realism to modernism (Hale, 2006). As Bolter and Joyce (1987) suggest:

The modern will to experiment ... has often been aimed at the conventions of the realistic novel, the nineteenth-century novel that told a story with a clear and cogent rhythm of events, and in the course of their attack modern authors have often found themselves straining at the conventions and limitations of the printed page. ... Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Pound, Eliot, and others all participated in the breakdown of traditions of narrative prose and poetry; breaking with such traditions was the definition of being modern. Pound and Eliot set about to replace the narrative element in poetry with fragmented anecdotes or mythical paradigms. Joyce and Woolf called into question the strategy of the novel as a linear and objective narrative. They devised new ways of structuring their works based upon stream of consciousness (Woolf) or upon multiple layers of topical and mythical organization (Joyce). All of these writers were trying to set up new relationships between the moment-by-moment experience of reading a text and our perception of the organizing and controlling structures of the text. (p. 45)

These artists may have been using the innovations of form and content to interrogate greater societal issues or more simply to challenge the traditional parameters of their medium. The very act of interrupting, of broadening the definitions of what counts as art endogenous or adjunct to their medium, meant that other artists who may not have found

expression in more traditional expressions of that medium were able to find a voice, too. This reveals how one set of interruptions enkindles another, so that moments of interruption become a tide of change and innovation. As various hegemonies compete, emerge and recede, so too do the challenges to them vary over time as artists seek ways to connect and question.

Art interrupting societal conventions. Aside from challenges to artistic form and content, art for the political can also be used as a tool to interrupt societal conventions, assumptions or stereotypes. Once again, as people strive to connect, make meaning, and forge wisdom, their individual struggles take on some of the spaces between self and state. One example is Sketch: Working Arts for Street-involved and Homeless Youth, an organisation that has worked for the last 18 years to transition Canadian youth out of homelessness through participation in the arts (Galloway, Novak & Escuyos, 2014; Sketch, 2014). The organisation uses art to challenge assumptions about what it means to be homeless and who homelessness can affect, as well as to give those who are homeless or underhoused a voice. On its website, Sketch's stated mission is to help youth who are homeless or on the margins "to experience the transformative power of the arts; to build leadership and economic self-sufficiency in the arts; and to cultivate social and environmental change through the arts" (Sketch, 2014, About Sketch section). In a radio interview, Sketch Director (Galloway, Novak & Escuyos, 2014), Phyllis Novak, elaborates that Sketch helps youth "find a position as a culture-maker and a change-maker through the arts"; she also notes that the arts, in particular, are useful in this context because they help people to alleviate stress, work on self-expression, and to have their "imaginations

invigorated” (Galloway, Novak & Escuyos, 2014). When asked why it is important to tell the stories of youth, like Cody Escuyos, who participate in the program, Novak (Galloway, Novak & Escuyos, 2014) states “I just think it’s important regarding homelessness, particularly young people living homeless, that we don’t generalise who they are. I mean they all have a really unique story and I think too often our responses are actually set on some kind, I don’t know, this Hollywood storybook version and that just doesn’t work for everybody.” For all those involved with Sketch, the arts present an opportunity to effect change in their own lives, but also to change how people perceive the homeless in their communities. The youth are working to transition out of homelessness and to make authentic connections with their communities, but they are also working to transform attitudes about homelessness. Novak (Galloway, Novak & Escuyos, 2014) talks about these stereotypes and how the arts can become a bridge between misconceptions and potential reform:

Arts are powerful tools to invigorate our communities and to create access and, I think, inclusion and a place for everyone in our community to participate in making it a vibrant and much more inclusive place, you know. I think that young people who are homeless are often seen mostly as burdens to society and perhaps something to be ashamed of, but, in fact, I think we need to look closely and get together with people and understand that they actually have beautiful and creative ideas and incredible entrepreneurship. So, I feel like they’re a necessary part of creating culture.

By exposing the homeless youth to the potential of art, and by connecting them with a voice and an audience, Sketch is as much about helping individuals transition out of

homelessness as it is about changing societal perceptions about homelessness. It is a subtle movement based on individual acts of speaking from the margins to form connections, to understanding supplementary spaces, and to draw attention to those practices embedded within the dominant hegemony that serve to isolate or restrict democracy and justice.

Art interrupting the state. Interruptive art can also exist as an overt challenge to the dominant political structure, government, or state by calling into question laws, practices, or leaders. This is art which at the time of its creation works in direct opposition to the prevailing laws, governments, and state institutions. It is openly subversive and calls to its audience for a change; it is the art of protest and revolution. In Chile during the 1980s, for instance, many women living in shantytowns worked against the Pinochet dictatorship by meeting to make and sell *arpilleras*, pictures created out of appliqué on cloth commonly depicting political repression (Adams, 2002). The *arpilleras* not only helped the women support themselves financially, but they also allowed them to find a voice to speak out to a broader audience. Most of the pieces were exported, bought by NGOs and human rights organisations. Some of the *arpilleras* were collected and put on display to draw attention to the cruelties of the Chilean dictatorship. Through their art, the women were able to work through their own emotions and experiences, express their desires for a different future, and draw attention to prevalent issues. The women's art functions in myriad ways: "for framing, to mobilize resources, to communicate information about themselves, and as a symbol" (Adams, 2002, p. 33). Music has also been used to galvanise individual action toward change for centuries. One example, discussed above, was the release of "Sun City," by Artists United Against Apartheid, which critiqued the

system of discrimination manifest in South Africa at the time. Another example was the use of hymns during the civil rights movement (Jasper, 1997), which not only brought solidarity through singing, but also outlined a certain set of beliefs which many diverse actors held in common. Literature has also been employed in service of change. For example, the 18th century English novel contained many examples of social protest, designed not for revolution but for reformatory practices that would move away from corruption (Scheuermann, 1985). Scheuermann (1985) cites examples of the novelist using characterisations, plot, and other literary devices to satirise and protest against dominant groups, including: Day's *Sandford and Merton*, which denounced the aristocracy; Fielding's *Amelia*, which criticised the penal system; and Bage's *Hermesprong*, which attacked politicians, the clergy, and the aristocracy. Myriad examples of the arts being used in opposition to extant systems of control can be culled from history, and it is this manifestation of art interrupting the state on which I will focus in more depth and detail using the case study of Ai Weiwei in chapter 7.

Art from the past interrupting the present. Before moving to the discussion of public and private arts, I would like to discuss how artefacts from the past can become interruptive if they are curated into an exhibition to challenge the present, or if the viewers are prepared to receive the art in the spirit of witnessing. Examples of a curatorial practice that use artefacts or artworks from the past to interrupt the present include the Museo de la Memoria's 2009 exhibition, "Ausencias" (Sedgwick, 2009) and the University of Wyoming Art Museum's show, "The Disappeared/Los Desaparecidos" (University of Wyoming, 2009). In the former, the artefacts were old photos and videos that had been curated into a

display that highlighted the atrocities of the Argentinean dictatorship between 1976 and 1983. In the latter, work from several Latin American artists had been selected to represent “the disappeared,” people who had been killed, tortured, and kidnapped by their governments. What prevents these exhibits from being wholly memorial is the direct call for action in the present. Not only was this an exhibition about the remembrance of atrocities, but also an interruption of the institutional and individual complacency that was in danger of settling in, even as family members persevered in their search for missing relatives. It is important to note that at the time of the display, many families were still in the midst of searching their disappeared loved ones (Sedgwick, 2009). And so the exhibits, reliant on artefacts and art from the past, generated an interruption in the present by calling, not for memorial, but for action. In a similar vein, the Argentinean “Siluetazo,” human-sized silhouettes representing the disappeared, were created in resistance and maintained in memorial, but have been “appropriated” in contemporary times to aid other political actors in their struggles (Druliolle, 2009).

There are also interesting examples of artists repurposing work from the past to move from conformity to interruption. One such artist is Allan Harding McKay, a Canadian war artist specialising in painting scenes from Afghanistan and Somalia. In 2012, Harding MacKay ripped apart five pieces of his own artwork in order to speak out against the federal government’s treatment of aboriginals and veterans (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation News [CBC News], 2012). The artist was quoted as saying, “I have art that has a power beyond my voice. So I am utilizing works that within my possession—assets that are within my possession—to shine a spotlight on things I completely disagree with in terms of this particular [federal] Harper government” (CBC News, 2012). In this case, not

only did the artist speak, act, and use his artwork to provoke an interruption, raise awareness, and protest, but he also reconstituted the ripped pieces of his artwork and put those on display anew, creating what is essentially a new work of art for the political. Each of the examples outlined above demonstrate how artwork from the past does not have to be relegated to the annals of history or submit to the tyranny of being (re)purposed as an educational artefact. Instead, it can be revitalised, reanimated, or as Druliolle (2009) would suggest, appropriated to inspire interruption in the present.

When discussing interruptions to the present using artefacts from the past, I must also address the larger question of whether work from the past can interrupt if the audience members see themselves not as spectators in the passive sense, but as listeners in the Levinasian sense, or, as Simon (2006) and Maclear (1999) write, as witnesses. It is a question which is important because its resolution informs the pedagogy I later advocate. While artefacts from the past are no longer interruptive in and of themselves, they can sometimes be employed to illuminate the possibilities for interruption and the value of individual acts of connection across the supplementary spaces if approached from the audience with a particular orientation. Simon (2006) and Maclear (1999) maintain a future-oriented stance on witnessing the past. Simon (2006) offers a vision for democracy that is always to come, with its full realisation always unfulfilled as people struggle with their connections to past, present and future. He also provides a clear dichotomy between how public history, of which art would form a component, can be structured in a democratic society. In the first form of its presentation, the audience for public history adopts “a simple one way ‘listen and learn’ pedagogy anchored in the notion of the museum as a authoritative legislator” and the value of public history is “based on an assumed transparent

utility, a self-evident and measurable usefulness, in regard to the substance of any given historical knowledge” (Simon, 2006, p. 116). In its second form, the form which aligns with the potential for interruption based on the ethicopolitical framework I advance, the audience, the listeners, for public history become witnesses. These listeners understand public history, its words and images, as “bearing of witness, an enactment of a difficult, at times, terrible gift” and are subject to “the demanding task of inheritance” (Simon, 2006, p. 117). It is, however, through this work and through this orientation toward history that we find the “potential to open a reconsideration of the terms of our lives now as well as in the future” (Simon, 2006, p. 117).

Simon (2005) claims that art, or indeed any studies from the past, occur when “the other’s time disrupts mine” (p. 93) to disrupt “one’s taken-for-granted sense-making practices” (p. 97). He applies the idea of Levinasian responsiveness, listening, and openness to the process of witnessing the past. In many ways, Simon’s assertions about the transactional sphere of public memory run parallel with my arguments for art as an other: the tenuousness of meaning, the willingness and openness to the ‘infinite of exteriority’, and the dual awareness of ourselves and of the world around us. Yet, even allowing for the argument that artefacts and art from the past have the power to reach into the immediacy of the present, they may fail to be interruptive because they do not necessarily suggest an alternate way of doing or being for the future. Simon’s approach to the transactional sphere of public memory is important because the type of education it suggests is not one that is wholly static and uncritical, of either the actions of the past or the responses of the self. But such transactions with the past, no matter how valuable to our “recognition of insufficiency” (Simon, 2005, p. 99), do not automatically translate into interruptions of the

current dominant hegemony; these works, which are necessarily *of* the past, do not necessarily provide a new subjectivity *for* the future. If, however, our transactions with the past, in provoking in us the “traumatism of astonishment” (Levinas as cited in Simon, 2005, p. 98), inspire us toward action in the present, toward the creation of a new political subjectivity, then—and only then—can such transactions be said to have furnished some interruptive value. Arendt (1998) discusses the immediacy required for art to ‘face’ in the following way:

We mentioned before that this reification and materialization, without which no thought can become a tangible thing, is always paid for, and that the price is life itself: it is always the “dead letter” in which the “living spirit” must survive, a deadness from which it can be rescued only when the dead letter comes again into contact with a life willing to resurrect it, although this resurrection of the dead shares with all living things that it, too, will die again. (p. 169)

This “deadness” can indeed be rescued in a limited way, as Simon contends, if one participates in acts of witness and memory through the transactional sphere of public memory.

Maclear (1999) suggests a similar stance: one of witness, rather than inculcation or education. Maclear (1999) reminds us, just as Simon (2006) did with the unfinished work of democracy, that “perfect sight ... cannot be accorded” (p. 76). Instead, Maclear (1999) asks the audience for art to become witnesses who “go beyond seeing art solely in evidentiary terms” (p. 86), who employ a “parallax vision” (p. 86). In the same way as Levinasian listening calls for us, as listeners, to exceed the closed circle of the totality of our consciousness, Maclear’s model for parallax vision demands that “viewing becomes an

ethical task” (p. 86). Maclear (1999) also returns us to the importance of the temporality of witnessing, listening, and interruption: this work is done in the present, and potentially with artefacts from the past, but it is oriented toward the future. For Maclear (1999), “art does not reflect memory, it anticipates it” (p. 82) and the act of witnessing pulls us away from remembrance and memorial and toward present transformations of self and toward a yet undetermined future. Both authors reject art or history as information and turn away from the audience as learner. They present the potential for works from the past to inspire interruption in the present, and to call into question the possibilities for the future by reframing audience approach. While the works themselves might not interrupt, they can still inspire interruption, a concept to which I return at the conclusion of this study when offering a pedagogy for art in chapter 8.

Does Medium Matter?

If interruptive art can emerge from within and without the leading hegemony, then it is important to offer some clarification on what artistic media lend themselves to the prospect of interruption. To do this, I turn to Arendt’s (1998) discussion of the arts, suggest that due to its unique characteristics architecture as interruptive art can be challenging, and make an argument for the interruptive potential of other arts, particularly photography and documentary.

Arendt (1998) provides a useful starting point to begin to distinguish between the types of artistic media that lend themselves to interruptive purposes. In her chapter on “Work” in *The Human Condition*, Arendt makes the overarching case for art as a necessity for the common world. Arendt (1998) notes,

In order to be what the world is always meant to be, a home for men during their life on earth, the human artifice must be a place fit for action and speech, for activities not only entirely useless for the necessities of life but of an entirely different nature from the manifold activities of fabrication by which the world itself and all things in it are produced. We need not choose here between Plato and Protagoras, or decide whether man or a god should be the measure of all things; what is certain is that the measure can be neither the driving necessity of biological life and labor nor the utilitarian instrumentalism of fabrication and usage. (p. 173-174)

It is precisely for this reason that the arts are important: they are not tied to the necessity of survival and do not have to furnish a reason for existing. The arts may simply abide. The artist, particularly the artist who is working with the intent to interrupt, may be freed from the necessities of life, to create something that faces the world and changes the way people think, or feel, or act. And yet Arendt also argues that the reason art is important is because it provides a concrete representation of the achievements of man. She claims that

If the *animal laborans* needs the help of *homo faber* to ease his labor and remove his pain, and if mortals need his help to erect a home on earth, acting and speaking men need the help of *homo faber* in his highest capacity, that is, the help of the artist, of poets and historiographers, of monument-builders or writers, because without them the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all. (Arendt, 1998, p. 73)

Arendt provides a compelling argument for the educative or memorial function of art, and her reading of art can perhaps be redeemed by Maclear's (1999) and Simon's (2006)

conceptions of witnessing, but the contention that the primary function of art is to furnish the common world with reminders of bygone lives, actions, and words is problematic. Interruptive art does not have to endure—in fact, it cannot. For it to interrupt is for it to exist in the very moment of its creation or (re)creation through a new curatorial practice. Once it fulfils this capacity, like a star passing across the night sky, it tends toward educative and memorial purposes. Arendt (1998) suggests that architecture is the most valuable of the “public arts” (p. 39), but I argue that for interruptive art, the reverse is true. The ephemeral moment of interruption becomes essential, and reification becomes an enemy of the intent: change.

It is because interruptive art is contingent upon some type of change, transformation, or generation of a new subjectivity, that I assert architecture is the least suitable art form for these ends. The majority of historical and contemporary architecture must be sanctioned by the state. It is rare that any kind of permanent structure may be erected without the inclusion of state and, very often, private interests. In modern and ancient times, “volumes have been written on the architecture of power ... It is perhaps particularly evident in colonial cities, and certainly strikingly so in fascist building; historically it is indeed the leitmotif of formal architectural history before the 17th century” (Flierl & Marcuse, 2009, p. 266). There can be little doubt, then, that the majority of city-building is closely governed by partnerships between those in power, such as the Church, the government, and big business. Cities, and most modern architecture comprising the development of cities, represent how space is controlled and allocated within the state. Marcuse (Flierl & Marcuse, 2009) asserts that “power relations (again, largely but not exclusively based on economic relations) determine the extent of public space. ... Nowhere

is this more immediately visible than in architecture” (p. 266). For these reasons, and in keeping with Rancière’s contention that true acts of politics and of democracy occur in an effort to interpret the supplementary spaces between the state and the *demos*, I assert that, historically, most architecture has worked to edify convention rather than to surpass it. From the birth of design to, what some might consider, the emerging death of construction, even the process of architectural creation negates the spontaneity and immediacy that an interruption necessitates.

One example of architecture which conforms to, or outright endorses, the authority of the state can be found in Beijing. Broudehoux (2010) notes that “as an intangible, imaginary entity lacking physicality, the state depends upon physical embodiments and permanent material markers to make its existence manifest” (p. 52-53). He also finds that “as the most visible expression of cultural and civic values, and the central element in the construction of urban space, architecture thus plays a central role in reinforcing the pervasive presence of the state in everyday life” (Broudehoux, 2010, p. 53). In Beijing, the state has bulldozed small neighbourhoods, razing communities to the ground in order to create spectacular architecture that serves as a marketing tool for the country or city, and sends a message of power and prosperity to the world. This was especially true in the lead up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008, when local officials, appointed rather than elected, used architecture, or “high-visibility physical projects” (Broudehoux, 2010, p. 56) as a tangible representation of their economic loyalty and achievement in office. The pre-Olympics facelift cost millions, ran up an enormous debt, exploited labour and displaced thousands of Chinese citizens. All this was done in the name of the state, which sought to “enhance the city’s economic performance in the global inter-urban competition by

attracting international tourists and foreign investors,” “restore China’s international image,” and “legitimize the power of China’s ruling elite” (Broudehoux, 2010, p. 57).

A second example of the state using architecture as a political tool is found in post-war Berlin. Berlin offers a unique example of how a city, physically divided according to political ideology, was built to reflect and amplify competing state rhetoric. Howell-Ardila (1998) describes how “in this highly politicized environment, architecture proved an effective tool of the Cold War” (p. 64) and further notes:

As one sees from the newspapers and architectural trade magazines of the day, the politically-charged rhetoric that accompanied the competitions and construction of the sites was an equally important component of postwar building policy. This environment ushered in a specific brand of politicization of architecture (in which glass and steel modernism, or "transparent" architecture connotes democracy, and monumentality, the use of stone facades, historicist ornament, and axial layouts express authoritarianism) that continues to inform discussions on Berlin's built environment. (p. 63)

It is notable that in this historical example, and through the passage of time, one can observe that the architectural style of these structures was originally designed with a particular political agenda, but that in the intervening years, it has been readapted in service of competing political movements. For example, the West German government’s architectural tribute to democracy, the *Bundestag* in Bonn, became the model for Mussolini’s Lake Como headquarters (Howell-Ardila, 1998). This raises two points: first, that architectural styles can be co-opted, but in all likelihood the co-option will occur by another state or subsequent hegemony because of the inherent power and funding required

to support most architectural undertakings; the second point is that while varied artistic media are employed in service of state rhetoric, interruptions using that medium emerging from the *demos* are far less plausible for architecture, which inherently involves land rights and permissions.

While I suggest that architecture is the least suitable, least malleable medium for interruptive art, I must also acknowledge that there has been some movement toward restoring the power of urban planning to the people. Boano and Kelling (2013) point to communities in Asia that are working toward greater participation in city planning efforts, striving to make connections from the margins. The Baan Mankong and the Asian Coalition for Community Action are seeking loans to build homes for those in need, repartitioning the sensible, in a Ranciorean sense, “to establish their identity by speaking for themselves and striving to get their voices heard and recognised as legitimate, thus disrupting the specific horizon and modalities of sensory experience” (Boano & Kelling, 2013, p. 43). There have also been some instances of appropriation and cooption. For example, Wodiszko captured architectural sites by projecting images onto them, such as The Hirshhorn Projection and the Hiroshima Projection (Deutsche, 2010; Phillips, 2003). These disruptions of the physical appearance of the site used projected images to illumine contrary perspectives and to provoke questions about the dominant narrative. By interrupting the everyday spaces of the common, Wodiszko was concerned with the questions of: “How can existing monuments and structures be animated? ... How can they be reappropriated, revised, and amended?” (Phillips, 2003, p. 36). While these are worthy questions, in line with the larger goal of art as interruption, Wodiszko’s work highlights the problematic nature of most architecture and monuments: that in spite of the brief

interventions his work generates, these structures reflect “the history of the victors”; they embody the “narrative of those who have succeeded at the expense of those who are vanquished” (Phillips, 2003, p 36).

Another example of a site being adapted is in Argentina, where the transformation of a former torture and detention site has been designated as a commemorative space (Di Paolantonio, 2011). The interruption discussed in Di Paolantonio’s (2011) study lies not so much in the repurposing of the detention space into one of commemoration, but more in the interruption that is provoked when artwork is displayed in the commemorative space. This is a complex example of architecture that has not only been transformed from a state-run set of buildings used to detain and torture to a space of commemoration, but also of a space which has been interrupted once again—an interruption of commemoration—to provoke unease. Di Paolantonio (2011) finds that there is a balance between the memorial space and the “*supplement*” (p. 757) that artwork displayed in that space provides. He also observes an interesting tension in the temporality involved with showing historical artwork alongside contemporary work, which echoes some of the possibilities for interruption through curatorial practice and through an approach of witnessing rather than learning:

There is a curious complexity to this apparently straightforward proposal, which gestures to the concern with forging a constellation, with unleashing an associative potency that can break into the present. To be sure, the possibility of re-showing political works of the past attests to a certain durability denied to such artefacts by the dictatorship; it signals that artworks were able to outlast the repression and provide a certain necessary stability required for common public life to emerge. But also, the arrangement and display of political artworks alongside more

contemporary works potentially stages the temporal complexity of an unfinished legacy of struggle: a type of haunting, which points to what remains unsettled and unsettling and requires present attention in such a commemorative site.

(Di Paolantonio, 2011, p. 751)

In this case, the architecture of the state becomes a site for commemoration, but also for interrupting the present, posing questions about identity, and ‘haunting’ witnesses into something more than simple commemoration. Yet in each of these contexts, with exception of the Baan Mankong and the Asian Coalition for Community Action, the architecture of the state has provided a point of resistance, a canvas or a backdrop for the real work of interruption. It is for this reason that I maintain, despite moments of appropriation which in and of themselves can be interpreted as disruptions, architecture itself is the least fitting medium for artistic interruption toward change.

To conclude the discussion on how certain artistic media may be used to interrupt the prevailing discourse, I would like to make an argument for inclusion in the category of interruptive arts the media of photography and documentary filmmaking. It is important for me to discuss photography and documentary because there is some debate in the general literature about the validity of these media as art, and also because I turn to elements of documentary and examples of photography as art in my chapter 7 case study analysis. Sontag (1977) has criticised photography and the image as “a treacherous form of leaching out the world, of turning it into a mental object” (p. 174). Sontag (1977) also claimed that the act of photographing and, what I suggest as its logical extension, filming “is essentially an act of non-intervention,” and that those who engage in it “have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged” (p. 178). The medium of photography has

also been problematised because “a photograph can be treated as a narrowly selective facsimile of the world” (Maclear, 1999, p. 81) and can lend itself to the erroneous belief that “an overwhelming event can be contained and miniaturized within the bordered frame of a photograph” (Maclear, 1999, p. 80). Maclear (1999) is less overtly critical of photography than Sontag, but she raises the legitimate concern that because of the window-on-the-world reality presented in a photograph, it can mislead the viewer into a false sense of certainty. In trying to turn us from merely looking toward witnessing, she worries that the photograph provides “a prosaic, unembellished glimpse of the world around us” (Maclear, 1999, p. 54) that lulls us into a “token relation to the past,” putting us into “a state of knowledge, revelation, and, therefore, power by converting an otherwise confounding experience into a mental object” (Maclear, 1999, p. 80). And Maclear is right to be concerned about the dangers of this confidence of knowledge which can prevent us from “slipping into the depths of uncertainty and not-knowing” (Maclear, 1999, p. 80). But I would argue that the image and its composition are neither closed nor automatically conformist; those who engage in the creation of photographic images or documentaries may be just as interested in interrupting the status quo as any other type of artist or political actor. One must consider the frames, choices, angles, lighting, and content the artist has chosen. A photograph is as much about what is visible as is about what is not. It is as open to interpretation as any canvas, lyric, chapter, or movement. Also, it is less a representation, less a pretending at cognitive wholeness, than it is a reminder of the fragility of our understanding. Peretz (2010) describes how the image

seems to mark a certain excess over each [discourse and history], as if not able to be contained by any one of them and thus never fully determinable by them, exposing

the limits of each of their capacity for determination, as well as, through this exposure, forcing them to communicate with each other, preventing their full self-determination and self-sufficiency. (p. 1)

The image is able to do this, to ‘face’ and to breach consciousness because it is not closed and objective. Instead, photography—and its counterpart in what is sometimes deemed “factographic” (Roberts, 1998, p. 50), the documentary—seem to be “obsessed and possessed by the attempt to show the shadow, the side of refusal at the heart of objective realism, a blank and dispossessing enigma” (Peretz, 2010, p. 3). In this way, the modern image and the documentary conduct “a two-faced operation, a showing of appearance and the showing of its shadowy enigma, realism and its blank double” (Peretz, 2010, p. 3).

Photography and documentary filmmaking, as with any expression of self, are open to interpretation. The arts reach across the chasm that separates ‘I’ from other; they encourage the listener to test new meanings, to present to the other an affirmation of the limits of self, of consciousness, of burgeoning wisdom. Certainly the arts are exposed, just as any attempt to make meaning or to call out to the other is exposed to the anxieties and promises of interpretation, just as listening opens oneself to the possibilities of creation.

CHAPTER 4

LISTENING AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

Each new hour holds new chances
 For new beginnings...
 The horizon leans forward,
 Offering you space to place new steps of change.
 (Angelou, 1993, January 20).

“There is no world without the adventure of art, without anthropomorphism, any more than there is a world without the Other” (Crignon, 2004, p. 117).

The process of beginning should find as its point of departure ethics. In this section, I begin to knit together the ethicopolitical framework with the assertion that art, in its interruptive appearance, can form a component of that framework's expression. The beginning of any political action comes with an awareness—a new understanding of a previously opaque sense of self and the world. It is in this way that listening inspires creation, though not all listening leads to political action, and not all political action may manifest as interruptive art. In this chapter, I outline the way in which Levinasian listening increases wisdom and demonstrate how that newfound wisdom may inspire. But first, because Levinas is often read against art as other, I begin with a discussion of why this

conception of listening is beneficial for artistic creation, and how one can reconcile the Levinas' reading of the other with the proposal for art as interruption.

Reconciling Levinas and Art as Other

As noted in chapter 2, Levinas' philosophy is not easily employed when constructing an argument for art as other. One of the points of contention is that Levinas (1989) claims that art begins to die as soon as it is complete. In a similar vein to Arendt, his critique of art as other is that it is a dead thing, unable to speak, and unable to solicit dialogue. Levinas (1989) avers that

The completion, the indelible seal of artistic production by which the artwork remains essentially disengaged, is underestimated—that supreme moment when the last brush stroke is done, when there is not another word to add to or to strike from the text, by virtue of which every artwork is classical. Such completion is different from the simple interruption which limits language and the works of nature and industry. (p. 131)

That art's ability to interrupt is limited is certainly true for works of art that conform to the contemporary dominant hegemony, or those viewed in hindsight with the intent to inform. It may even be true for art in the present when viewed from outside the relevant context of its creation—that is, when viewed from outside the influence of the relevant state/*demos*. I disagree, however, with Levinas' (1989) further assertion that “[artwork] does not give itself out as the beginning of a dialogue” and that one seeks to find “knowledge through art” (p. 131). In accordance with the nuanced distinctions between art which conforms and art for the political, I argue here that Levinas has confined his critique to art that is

reflective of prevailing ideology and that serves as cultural production; he does not account for art which can, and does, speak in the moment of its birth, and in the context of its brief political relevance.

Levinas' (1989) claim that art fails as an other because it "does not give itself out as the beginning of a dialogue" is especially interesting. Turning to Gibbs' (2000) analysis of Levinasian listening, one discovers that because 'I' do not listen with the intent to respond, but with an attitude of apology, my only response to the other is an affirmation of my limits, a bent knee before the teacher. Gibbs (2000) notes that "called to speak, I respond, I speak as I, but to another, to one who can criticize me" (p. 45). Can art be an audience to my response? Not fully, I concede, because it is only I (or yet another other) who will hear the response. But Gibbs (2000) also determines that "discourse ... does not end in my first response, but rather leads into society, into social institutions and beyond (where a stable meaning can be given to the signs)—but this apologetic moment is never lost" (p. 37). And so it is that listening and response eventually move from the pure moment of shattering consciousness to the building of meaning in a more reified way. Is this not the very transition from an interruption to the common logics of hegemony? Is this not, also, the very path from interruptive to educative or informative? And so does the other have to begin a traditional dialogue in order to function as an other, or in order to break through consciousness and offer new meaning? How is it possible that we are always listeners, yet that art fails as an other because it cannot hear? Does not the fact that art speaks, even if for a limited time, mean that it is an other, calling for us not to engage in dialogic interaction, but demanding that we listen, hear, and break ourselves apart?

Levinas is widely considered an iconoclast, disputing the ability of an image through art (mostly the plastic arts) to represent the face of the other (Crignon, 2004). Yet in his discussion of the tension between the body and the image, Crignon (2004) provides a clear understanding that Levinas is not wholly iconoclastic. Crignon (2004) notes:

The image is always, for Levinas, an image of the face ... but it is also that from which the face must be saved. Levinas, in this sense, is not iconoclastic but iconomachic; it is for him less a matter of having a position than of thinking a tension, a tension that is none other than the power of images to touch us. (p. 119)

This tension suggests that there is room for consideration of Levinas in the discussion of the role of art as an other, as well as in parallel of the role of the other as a source of inspiration for art. Art is as originary as any motivation from the other or from the drive of desire (Crignon, 2004) and any attempt to dismiss it as a possible source for making meaning, or for confronting the limits of our selves, ignores the irrevocable connection between being and experiencing, the connection between what propels us toward art as creators and listeners.

Kenaar (2011) furthers the discussion of whether art has the power to face, focussing specifically on Levinas and the image. In a compelling and useful move, Kennan presents the tension that emerges from discussions of Levinas and the image, the tension between the visual and the transcendental, as a necessary and acceptable component of Levinasian ethics. He asks:

Should we understand the unresolved tension between the visual and non-visual dimensions of the Other's face as a problem or is it, rather, the expression of the very form of the Other's appearance? Must the Levinasian face be 'rescued' from

the bounds of the visual or does it ultimately need the visual as necessary grounds for the revelation of transcendence? Is alterity exterior to the visual or is it a vanishing point that can be accessed only by looking in and through the visual? (Kenaan, 2011, p. 153)

In response, Kenaan (2011) determines that the Levinasian ‘face’ is less a face presented visually, than it is a manifestation of the tension between the visual and the transcendent. The face is not simply a “static, mirroring structure” (Kenaan, 2011, p. 154), but an act of turning toward and away. The face becomes “a one directional vector crossing the space between us, a liminal encounter that precedes any specific sense or meaning that could appear in the field between us” (Kenaan, 2011, p. 154) that may be visual but whose call is not limited to that which is contained within the visual. Kenaan’s reference to facing as a movement runs parallel to Levinas’ (2011) own writings on the subject of desire for the invisible, metaphysics, in the following way:

It is turned toward the “elsewhere” and the “otherwise” and the “other.” For in the most general form it has assumed in the history of thought it appears as a movement going forth from a world that is familiar to us, whatever be the yet unknown lands that bound it or that it hides from view, from an “at home” (“chez soi”) which we inhabit, toward an alien outside-of-oneself (*hors-de-soi*), toward a yonder. (p. 33)

Kenaan has picked up on Levinas’ writing of facing as a movement and built a case that to face is to act, to move. Kenaan’s work clears some of the obstacles to using art as a manifestation of the face of the other by suggesting that the tension, the spaces created between self and other through the act of turning to face, are of surpassing importance; these should not be negated or bogged down with the limiting discussion of the face or the

image as a simple visual structure with defined content. To do so would be to negate the possibilities proposed in the act of facing. To do so would be to thematize the face as a concept that is not open to reworking or rethinking. To do so would be to limit and foreclose the ability for Levinas' thinking on listening to reach into the present.

Knowledge Versus Wisdom

The tension between the appearance of the face and the totalising effect of representation that the face must destroy, as Crignon (2004) describes, is the very same tension that suspends us between the *bonne* and *mauvaise* conscience (Levinas, 1989), between the certainty of knowledge and the astonishment of the unknown. Our ability to live through this tension is at once what impels us toward the other and what renders us learners in the face of the other, who is teacher. We cannot, unless we surrender to the seduction of the false promise of absolute knowledge, ever be certain of our selves. We cannot, unless we choose to be both deaf to the call of the other and trapped with the confines of the fiction of self-sufficiency, ever be enough on our own. We must turn away from the *bonne conscience* of certainty, of absolute knowledge, to the tenuous and trembling ground of the *mauvaise conscience*.

Levinas rejects conventional Western philosophical tradition, which correlates knowledge and being, as a type of "ontological imperialism" (Eppert, 2000, p. 222). He critiques this Western denotation of knowledge because it: (a) is "*freed* of its otherness"; (b) is based on "the ideal of rationality or of sense"; (c) grants "a privilege ... to the present, which is present to thought, of which the future and the past are modalities or modifications: re-presentations" (Levinas, 1989, p. 76). Levinas (1989) also turns away

from knowledge as re-presentation because “nothing may remain *other* to it” (p. 77) and suggests that, according to this Western tradition, knowledge is

a way of doing something which consists precisely of thinking through knowing, of seizing something and making it one’s own, of reducing to presence and representing the difference of being, an activity which *appropriates* and *grasps* the otherness of the known. (p. 76)

It is a version of knowledge that leaves us ignorant of the other, dismissive of any possibility for alterity, and entirely mired within the confines of that which is concrete in the present, the rational, and the resulting *bonne conscience*. As Levinas further notes in *Totality and Infinity* (2011):

Objectivity is absorbed in absolute knowledge, and the being of the thinker, the humanity of man, is therewith conformed to the perpetuity of the solid in itself, within a totality where the humanity of man and the exteriority of the object are at the same time conserved and absorbed. (p. 296)

This type of absolute knowledge “is linear, cumulative, and progressive and leads to mastery” (van Alphen, 2005, p. 186); it presumes not only to know the present through what has presence, but also suggests that “if the past is known, the future can be dominated, kept under control (van Alphen, 2005, p. 186). If I accept this definition of knowledge, then I am only ever exposed to what lies within the machinery of the state and to what is conceived of as knowledge by those in power. With this version of knowledge, I am ignorant of my potential isolation from the state, of the existence of supplementary spaces, of my responsibility for the other, and of my potential for freedom through my interactions with the other. While I might be aware of the other, he or she remains superfluous to my

pursuit of knowledge. I can dismiss the other as largely irrelevant, since he or she has nothing new to teach me. I am neither required to engage with this other, nor do I stand to benefit from the exchange.

Levinas (2011) also addresses the totalising effect of knowledge when tracing the roots of freedom. He makes the case here again that objective knowledge, what he terms “knowledge of knowledge” (p. 85), is insufficient for freedom—in fact, betrays freedom by offering a shallow pretence of it. Levinas (2011) is clear: to understand freedom, one must first understand that which grounds it, or that which underpins it. This underpinning is not objective knowledge and cannot be uncovered using “questions that are raised for the understanding of the things aimed at in the naive act of cognition” which would only result in “elaborating a psychology” (p. 85). To proceed through the knowledge of *what is* in search for what founds freedom is to follow a “sterile course” and to wrongly “suppose in advance that freedom can be founded only on itself, for freedom, the determination of the other by the same, is the very movement of representation and of its evidence” (Levinas, 2011, p. 85). I will return in chapter 5 to this concept of representation and evidence when discussing language and thematization. But here, I would like to focus on the inescapable tension presented by Levinas’ understanding of what grounds freedom. He suggests that:

To identify the problem of foundation with the knowledge of knowledge is to forget the arbitrariness of freedom, which is precisely what has to be grounded. The knowing whose essence is critique cannot be reduced to objective cognition; it leads to the Other. To welcome the Other is to put in question my freedom. (Levinas, 2011, p. 85)

How can the “arbitrariness of freedom” be “grounded”? Only on very shaky ground.

Levinas does not offer a solution or horizon as a description of what founds freedom—to do so would be to defy the logic of his philosophy and to undermine the very unknowability of what he proposes by offering in advance a certainty.

Instead of this version of self-sufficient knowledge, Levinas (1989) advocates for wisdom through the difficult act of listening and facing the other. This process disrupts one’s “taken-for-granted sense-making practices” (Simon, 2005, p. 97) and challenges “feelings of sure-footedness and historical certitude” (Maclear, 1999, p. 80); it requires both the act of listening and a certain affective orientation or disposition. The act of listening stems from a position of instability (Levinas, 1989) and vulnerability (Gibbs, 2000). The motivation for the act of listening lies within the desire for meaning. As Gibbs (2000) notes “I listen to the other person to receive the world, to find myself questioned, to learn from the other person as my teacher, and in order to become able to respond, able to justify myself” (p. 30). It is an act which “instigates new possibilities” (Gibbs, 2000, p. 31) by breaking into “the closed circle of totality” (Levinas as cited in Gibbs, 2000, p. 35). It is an act which takes me outside myself and allows me to receive the world, not in accordance with what I can touch in the present—for “things do not speak” (Gibbs, 2000, p. 38)—or memorize from the past, but from an encounter with an “absolute alterity ... [who is] offering me a view of the world, making that world objective, while retaining the authority to contest the world” (Gibbs, 2000, p. 38). It is through this performance that I can begin to be faced with what I do not know. It is through this performance that I can begin a process of self-checks through the “expansion of the self’s control in consciousness” producing

“greater criticism and greater responsibility” (Gibbs, 2000, p. 43). And it is through this performance, that my inspiration and desire for creation emerge.

Listening for Inspiration

Listening is an interruption that begets further interruption. It provides a person with the desire, the inspiration, and the content for interruption by: (a) broadening the criteria for thought as a patrol of consciousness; (b) overflowing consciousness and exposing the “infinity of exteriority” (Gibbs, 2000, p. 34); and (c) developing the desire for infinity. This expansion of consciousness can be mobilised into political action if one uses it to assail (or even become aware of) the “partition of the sensible” (Rancière, 2001, p. 6), which I will discuss at length in the following chapter.

Listening broadens my awareness of the world because it is in listening that I am able to ‘connect and disconnect’ with the other, and by extension, with the state or other members of the *demos*. Gibbs (2000) notes that “if one is looking for a definition of myself, of what I really am in myself, then the answer will require the inclusion of something that is not myself” (p. 32). But what I am looking for is not, in the Hegelian sense, simply the opposite of what I am. I am not seeking what I am not. Because, as Levinas (2011) contends, “if the same would establish its identity by simple *opposition to the other*, it would already be a part of a totality encompassing the same and the other” (p. 38). I am not seeking within a totality, but beyond it. In listening to the other, I become aware of my own limits and can come to know myself because: the other introduces me to the world; he or she augments the “criterion of adequacy” (Gibbs, 2000, p. 41) I use for thought, which acts as a “gatekeeper of consciousness” (p. 42) and which allows “the self [to check] itself”

(Levinas as cited in Gibbs, 2000); this other expands what I consider meaningful and gives me new ways for connecting and disconnecting with the world. It is also in the process of listening that I can transcend my self and recognise the impossibility of ever fully knowing the other; this excess that remains outside the control of knowing mirrors the void that can be created between discourse and noise.

The face of the other remains forever beyond me, elusive, an “absolute alterity” (Levinas as cited in Gibbs, 2000, p. 38) who overflows my consciousness. This allusion to consciousness and to the surpassing of it is what is paramount in the act of listening, and what most intimately links listening with inspiration. In his study of music, Copland (1980) suggests that, “inspiration may be a form of superconsciousness, or perhaps of subconsciousness—I wouldn't know; but I am sure that it is the antithesis of self-consciousness” and that, “the inspired moment may sometimes be described as a kind of hallucinatory state of mind” (42-43). This perception of inspiration draws on a sense of that which runs outside the self and certainly outside of the limits of self-consciousness. The interaction with the other can inspire us because it stimulates our ‘superconsciousness’ and exposes the spaces that lie beyond our patrol of thought. Copland’s observation that inspiration is akin to a “hallucinatory state” also invokes the dizzying sense of enormity and the quavering uncertainty that one experiences in an interaction with the other. This is the moment of contact and of listening when one is held over the horizon edge of consciousness, exposed to the ‘infinity of exteriority’. Because the other at once enlarges my sphere of meaning and yet remains absolutely beyond me, listening to him or her stimulates my imagination and excites my sense of the possible. I am exposed to the infinity of exteriority and am challenged by it. The awareness that I can never fully know

the other compels me to keep listening, while my broadening span of meaning exposes new possibilities to connect and disconnect with the state across the void of unknowability. I become a listener who “does not only listen once, but must remain attentive, still listening” (Gibbs, 2000, p. 40). The anarchic “break-in to the closed circle of totality” that exceeds my consciousness as I listen is required of me again and again: I am infinitely responsible to listen infinitely (James, 2009). This ongoing process of rupture, connection, and tenuousness exactly mirrors the process of *subjectification* that occurs when I speak, or act politically, to interpret the supplementary and to assail the extant partition of the sensible.

One cannot, in the discussions of exteriority and infinity, ignore the power of desire, which continually orients us toward the other and which ensures that we continue to face the other in search of further meaning. Levinas (2011) describes the relationship between desire and infinity in the following way:

Infinity is not the "object" of a cognition (which would be to reduce it to the measure of the gaze that contemplates), but is the desirable, that which arouses Desire, that is, that which is approachable by a thought that at each instant *thinks more than it thinks*. The infinite is not thereby an immense object, exceeding the horizons of the look. It is Desire that measures the infinity of the infinite, for it is a measure through the very impossibility of measure. (p. 62)

I argue here that to “think more than it thinks” is to recognise that the self is limited and to feel the need to expand awareness by listening. It is the desire to listen, to break apart, to tentatively explore the recently redrawn boundaries of consciousness, and to seek expression through the newly opened spaces of meaning. As I grow through the spiral of meaning-making, approaching and yet never approaching infinity, I will also grow the

desire to keep learning from my teacher, to respond, and to test the limits of the new totalities I construct and demolish.

As Kenaan (2011) and Levinas (2011) describe, the act of facing is a movement. The desire which induces me to keep listening and to keep turning toward the other is also not a static fixation. My desire is a movement, is “the elsewhere or the other, is called *other* in an eminent sense” and “no journey, no change of climate or of scenery could satisfy the desire bent toward it” (Levinas, 2011, p. 33). In this sense, it is a longing that cannot be satisfied by self; indeed, even in turning toward the other, this is not a desire that finds its fruition in satisfaction. It is a thing which feeds itself. It is not a desire quelled or quellable; it is an insistent urge which ceaselessly compels me, not to find that which I need born of the “consciousness of what has been lost” (Levinas, 2011, p. 34), but toward a land I do not yet know. It is a desire which “desires beyond everything that can simply complete it. It is like goodness—the Desired does not fulfill it, but deepens it” (Levinas, 2011, p. 34). Listening moves me closer to that which I desire: the invisible always beyond the horizon. It does not guide me to the safety of the past or indulge me in remembrance. It does not permit me nostalgia nor protect me with security. Instead, it opens me up and undoes my certainty. It opens me up, and shows me the spaces between myself and the (im)possibility of satisfaction. It is only once the potential of these spaces reveal themselves to me that I am able to speak, or act politically, to create an interruption, to explore the possibilities for change.

CHAPTER 5

ART AS AN ACT OF SPEAKING FOR FREEDOM

“speak up speak up speak up / speaking is beautiful and necessary”

(Salah Jahin as cited in Young, 2013, March 3)

If the process of listening opens in me a capacity to respond, then speaking and acting, interrupting and creating, become acts of freedom. In this chapter, I present an ethics for speaking based on Levinasian understandings of how and why one speaks in response to the other (Gibbs, 2000; Levinas 2011) in both call and apology. I also discuss how Rancière (2001) advances speaking from the *demos* as an act of interpretation toward democracy. Lastly, I will discuss how art for the political, interruptive art, can function as all three: a call, an apology, and an act of interpretation, all toward freedom.

Levinas and the Ethics of Speaking

Levinas (1989) has, through advocating for listening that is based in an *a priori* responsibility to the other, provided a way for ethics to be rooted in a particular affective disposition. In the transaction between I and the absolute alterity of the other, Levinas describes a relationship that is wholly dependent on the irreversibility of the role of I and other. First, to make meaning and to break apart the illusion of totality, I must begin with the relegation of the ego, the opening of my self to the perpetual position of listener, of learner, in the face of the other as teacher. Second, I speak in order to respond, and in order

to affirm my self, but never assume the role of teacher. In this process, Levinas (2011) is not describing speaker *qua* speaker, but speaker as responder:

Conversation, from the very fact that it maintains the distance between me and the Other, the radical separation asserted in transcendence which prevents the reconstitution of totality, cannot renounce the egoism of its existence; but the very fact of being in a conversation consists in recognizing in the Other a *right* over this egoism, and hence in justifying oneself. Apology, in which the I at the same time asserts itself and inclines before the transcendent, belongs to the essence of conversation. The goodness in which ... conversation issues and from which it draws signification will not undo this apologetic moment. (p. 40)

In this instant of listening, and in the subsequent moments of response, I am, as a listener, not responding polemically to advance or defend my understanding of the world. The other retains his or her ipseity entirely; he or she is not called into question and does not fall within the capacity of my judgement. Because the other cannot be appropriated and is not subject to derision, the affective position is essentially non-violent. Gibbs (2000) notes that the other as speaker is not master, in the Hegelian sense, so much as teacher (p. 34). The teacher does not seek to colonise my thinking or to assert an understanding over my own—indeed, to do so would be an impossible task of reconciliation—but instead seeks to breach the certainty of my current thinking. The other breaks apart my consciousness not with violence, but with the right of the other to whom I have an innate sense of owing, of responsibility. The other speaks as teacher to expose me to the infinity of exteriority and to help me grow in wisdom. So it is that if I speak, I speak in response, as a listener, who recognises the fiction of totality and who is called on to affirm, to apologise, and to change.

But what is it about speaking specifically that is so important to the Levinasian model, both speaking out as an other and speaking in response to an other? To answer this question, I must step back to discussions of freedom and responsibility from chapter 1. As noted, I need the other to be freed from the constraints of totalising narratives, and it is this promise of freedom, in combination with the previously-discussed *a priori* responsibility for the other, which constructs the affective disposition of I as listener and I as speaker. Levinas (2011) relates this need for the other to the acts of listening and speaking, and distinguishes speaking from thinking, by noting that

The breach of totality is not an operation of thought, obtained by a simple distinguishing of terms that evoke one another or at least line up opposite one another. The void that breaks the totality can be maintained against an inevitably totalizing and synoptic thought only if thought finds itself *faced* with an other refractory to categories. Rather than constituting a total with this other as with an object, *thought consists in speaking*. (Italics in original, p. 40)

It is clear that thinking is not enough. Levinas (1989) rejects thinking as a “monologue” which “would recover the sovereignty characteristic of the autonomous person, only by becoming universal” (p. 72). Put another way, thinking unto itself cannot shatter totality, but works only to reinforce extant structures of logic. For this reason, I am required to engage in the exteriority of speaking, the outside-of-self act of speaking, if I am to form wisdom in new directions and to create spaces beyond the enclosures of knowledge. Without the other, I am imprisoned in reason, in Western totalities of truth and objectivity, with no room for the other and with no hope of rupturing the sameness of a universal discourse. Another way of reflecting on the connections between thought and action is to

suggest that a thought unspoken can only become a memory. Its only and its greatest potential is as a thing remembered. A thought unspoken and not acted upon, unperformed, is a quiet and impotent thing even if it leads to other thought, deeper thought. These further thoughts, if also unspoken or unarticulated as action, only serve to extend the depth of what has been lost to the world. The key then with what is thought or even what is remembered is that it be spoken, or recorded, or acted upon. That is where exists the capacity for something better, or at the very least different, than what is. It is in speaking that my thought comes into being, that I recognise my natality, that I begin.

But there is a problem. On one hand, Levinas (2011) asserts, “speech is thus the origin of all signification—of tools and all human works—for through it the referential system from which every signification arises receives the very principle of its functioning, its key” (p. 98). Language, he argues (and speaking in any form, I suggest in the third section of this chapter), is what organises the phenomena of existence into meaning. Levinas (2011) also notes that “speech first founds community by *giving*, by presenting the phenomenon as given; and it gives by thematizing” (p. 98) and that the process of thematization “relates the phenomenon to the existent, to exteriority, to the Infinity of the other uncontained by my thought” (p. 99). On the other hand, Levinas (2011) asserts that “the other alone eludes thematization” (p. 86) and that thematization, arrived at through speaking, forecloses the other. As noted in chapter 4 during the discussion of knowledge, Levinas (2011) would not have us seek representation and evidence to make a “determination of the other by the same” (p. 85). The need for language and the simultaneous dangers of thematization create a tension which is not easily resolved, but can still be worked through. Critchley (1999) examines the issue and determines

the disposition towards alterity within the subject which is the condition of possibility for the ethical relation to the other is expressed linguistically or articulated philosophically by recourse to an ethical language that has a paradoxical relation to that which it is attempting to thematize. As so often in the later Levinas, it is a question of trying to *say* that which cannot be *said*, or *proposing* that which cannot be propositionally *stated*, of *enunciating* that which cannot be *enunciated*, and what has to be said, stated or enunciated is subjectivity itself. (Italics in original, Critchley, 1999, p. 231)

Levinas' work abounds with these irreconcilable tensions—but perhaps that is the point. Would it not be hypocritical to have a philosophy that engages with the impossibility of completeness yet presents no possibilities for paradox or tension? Would it not be strange to ethics as a first philosophy to determine in advance the potential outcomes? Language is often necessary for speaking, just as it is often requisite for action, but its use is not unproblematic. Language leads to thematization which must be resisted in order to establish the truer, more tenuous, more subjective grounds for freedom. Language creates space between *saying* and *said*, and it is precisely in these spaces that the possibility born of listening and responding, freedom, emerges.

Rancière and the Politics of Speaking

If Levinasian listening is rooted in *a priori* responsibility for the other, then Rancière's conception of political action toward freedom and democracy is based in an *a posteriori* response to what has been heard: interpretation. For it is only after experiencing the absolute alterity of the other, and only once I perceive the supplementary spaces

between self and state, that I can begin to act in generation of new subjectivities and a repartition of the sensible.

When discussing the partition of the sensible, Rancière (2001) provides grounding for the previously discussed idea of duality between the state and the *demos*. He describes how the world can be divided into two halves, the perceptible and the imperceptible, discourse and noise, state and *demos*. The state itself is based on a “cutting up of the world” (Rancière, 2001, p. 7) into the *nemeîn* and the *nomoi*, that which is at once appropriated and distributed. It is a division “on the one hand, [into] that which separates and excludes; on the other, that which allows participation” (Rancière, 2001, p. 7). The state is wholly comprised of “groups dedicated to specific modes of action, in places where these occupations are exercised, in modes of being corresponding to these occupations and these places” (Rancière, 2001, p. 7) with no space for void or supplement. That which is included in the state becomes part of the common discourse, while that which is excluded is considered noise. It is from this point of departure that Rancière’s (1999) vision for political action develops, not as a process by which one comes into awareness of one’s own voice and power, thereby imposing one’s “weight on society” (p. 40), but rather through a recognition of how one interacts with the state through supplementary spaces. Rancière’s understanding of politics rejects the premise that “political subjectivities and identities *can be* and *have to be* fully formed before democracy can ‘take off’” (Biesta, 2011, p. 151), just as Levinas’ focus on listening rejects absolute knowledge. Instead, Rancière’s vision of politics is “fundamentally anarchic” because “there is no particular stable form for the subjectivity of the democratic citizen” (Biesta, 2011, p. 150). Rancière (1999) suggests that a political subject is someone who “connects and disconnects different areas, regions,

identities, functions and capacities existing in the configuration of a given experience” (p. 40) to add new political subjectivities to the discourse. Politics appears through “the litigation of the perceptible,” as established by the state, to create a supplemental space for “a part of the no-part identified with the community as a whole” (Rancière, 2001, p. 7). By speaking, by interpreting the void in an act of interruption, I reconstitute the partition of the sensible. I alter who is permitted to participate in the act of speaking. I assail “the visible and sayable” (Rancière, 2001, p. 7) and expand what is considered discourse. The interruption of my voice at once connects me and generates new subjectivities, new partitions for the ‘part of no-part,’ across the divide. This distinction between becoming aware of one’s position within society, and connecting and disconnecting is significant because it suggests that listening does not help an individual gain knowledge of his own voice and power, but instead opens him up to the possibility of new and different connections to come. While it remains *impossible* to ever truly know the other, so it remains equally *possible* to expose new opportunities for connection and political action. It is in these essays to affirm one’s self before the other, to listen, to ‘connect and disconnect’, that the relationship between Levinasian ethics and Rancièrian politics once again emerges.

The concept of supplementary space between self and other, between state and *demos*, resonates with the spaces of the infinity of exteriority exposed by Levinasian modes of listening. Rancière (2005) states that his “research does not deal with time and space as forms of presentation of the objects of knowledge,” instead, his work “deals with time and space as forms of configuration of our ‘place’ in society, forms of distribution of the common and the private, and of assignation to everybody of his or her own part” (p. 13).

As noted above, Rancière determines that to act politically is to seek, as an individual from

the outside, from the *demos*, to make connections between self and the state. But how are these connections forged? How are politics enacted? As with Levinas (2011), Rancière (2001) suggests that speaking has a unique function in these acts of interpretation. Arsenjuk (2007) analyses Rancière's work and notes that speech is tied to political action because "speech acts are thus no longer understood as ideological artefacts or the superstructural effects of some 'absent cause,' but precisely as acts, as political gestures in themselves, capable of reconfiguring the situation in which they are enunciated" (p. 1). Here, Rancière advances an idea that will become important to further arguments for the interruptive and political capacity of art. Arsenjuk notes that Rancière sees the act of speaking, of creating, 'precisely as acts' and as 'political gestures in themselves'; thus, politics are enacted through the creation of a new subjectivity using language (or, as I will later argue, symbols and images) to 'reconfigure the situation in which they are enunciated.' And further, Rancière does not bind his political actors as tightly to the restrictions of speaking in the strictest form of dialogue as does Levinas. In tension with Levinas' (1989; 2011) objection that the written word can be a rigid constraint, Arsenjuk (2007) observes Rancière's claim that:

the written word – the 'orphan word' Plato calls it – is always a supplementary element in relation to the communal order. It can liberate itself from a situation in which the roles of the proper addresser and the addressee, as well as the limits of what is sayable, are strictly determined. The written word can be appropriated by anyone. Unlike the individual utterance of the spoken word which is tied to 'the logic of the proper', the written word, unexpected and inexhaustible, presents a certain 'wandering excess' in relation to the world of carefully distributed roles,

tasks and the speech that is understood as properly belonging to the individuals and groups that are seen as performing these roles and tasks within the communal order. This excess of words over the existing distribution of the common that establishes the communal order represents the egalitarian power of language – which Rancière calls *literarity* – the ability to disturb the existing circuits of words, meanings and places of enunciation. (Arsenjuk, 2007, p. 1-2)

The appropriation of the written word is for Rancière is precisely what creates space for interpretation. I extend this evaluation of the written word as a powerful and ‘egalitarian’ force toward change to all forms of interruptive art. As Boano and Kelling (2013) note, “artistic practices ... are forms of visibility that can themselves serve as interruptions of the given partition of the sensible” (pp. 42-43). It is the act of creating which allows a political actor to disturb the stagnant waters of the state, to interrupt by reaching across the space using word or image, or some *mélange* of the two, to call, to respond, to question, and to affirm. By creating, I am speaking. By creating, I have made visible a ripple in the water, I have manifested disquiet, I have invited unease. My ‘speech’, released from the confines of spoken language only, has been liberated to a variety of forms. I am now freer than before to act politically and to generate interruptions in whatever mode is most accessible to my frames of consciousness and to my hopes for transformation.

Interruptive Art as a Call to the Other, an Apology and an Act of Interpretation

Having established the connections between speaking and freedom, I now turn back to how art for the political can function as an act of speaking. While language is important to the discussion of speaking, “art takes us to places beyond the smooth everyday capacities

of speech” (Maclear, 1999, p. 81). The brief moment of its political relevance, not its artistic relevance, is when art exhibits its ethicopolitical possibilities: the power to call, to respond, or to interpret. The audience, as either listener or as other to whom the artist is responding, is witness to the emergence of a new political subjectivity. The generation of a new political subjectivity, an act of interpretation, having been inspired by the artist’s broadened consciousness after listening, is now an act for freedom, a powerful force for change, and a gesture toward ‘greatness.’

Levinas proffers the “spiral” (Gibbs, 2000) as a visual representation of ethics, and I have previously asserted that the whole of this ethicopolitical framework, which moves from beginning to infinity, can be visually represented using Fermat’s spiral. I return to this point now to suggest that art as an expression of ethical politics is a function and extension of the spiralled framework on which it is based. Presume that I am faced, listening, and then am called on to respond. I may respond in words, or through the creation of art. Alternately, I may be called upon by the other to listen wherein the other is a work of art. I may decide to act, may decide to begin, by drawing on the inspiration from my acts of listening and response. I may, inspired, begin to act politically to interpret the spaces between myself and the state by creating works of art. These works, rich in the moment of their creation with the potential to interrupt, become voices calling across space. So it is that interruptive works of art make use of language or images, or a combination of both, to enact politics.

That language assumes this power for ethics and politics is accepted by Levinas (2011), Rancière (2007), and Arendt (1998). My suggestion here is that language⁵ (and the function language performs as a conduit for inspiration and for political action) is integral to art, whether it is through obvious utilisation in songs, novels, or poems, whether it is represented in film as dialogue, or whether its function is mirrored through imagery. It is an inescapable link, the link between language and art, because even when one is faced with an image, it is the language of thought that overtakes pure sensible experience to receive new meaning; it is the language of thought as a “gatekeeper of consciousness” (Gibbs, 2000, p. 42) which is broken apart in its exposure to the other. The connection between language and image that I posit above, that language complements image and symbol because of the innate connections between thought and language, is also echoed in Levinas (2011) who notes that “language is not one modality of symbolism; every symbolism refers already to language” (p. 98). As I have previously discussed, Levinas (2011), with whom one encounters the most resistance when discussing the distinctions between language and forms, or ‘things,’ still offers important consideration for the role of language by cleaving the act of saying from what is said. The spaces created in the tension between the saying

⁵ Let me preface this discussion by acknowledging that the literature on what constitutes language is substantial and varied. While I mostly draw upon the interpretation of language as words, especially as I make connections with Levinas (2011), Rancière (2007), and Arendt (1998), I recognise that there are other possibilities that may also connect the spaces between art and meaning (and may, perhaps, do so even more effectively). For example, Kress and Leeuwen (1996; 2002) argue for the extension of the term ‘grammar’ to visual communication and colour. In this context, colour gives meaning directly, without a verbal or linguistic intercessor. In a way, however, the semiotic discussion of what constitutes language, and whether art is a language in and of itself, is almost irrelevant to the larger conversation: that art and language lead to meaning and yet fall short, create space. And by being so confined, they are simultaneously required and exceeded. They provide some entry into awareness of the other, but fall short of fruition. My suggestion is that, even as art might draw upon language for meaning, it may also exceed language in some way. I posit that “artistic meaning lies beyond the sayable and thus cannot be captured in language” (Hagberg, 1995, p. 2). What is central to this argument is that art may exceed language, but the absolute alterity of the other exceeds both. Despite these limitations, art and language are the meagre and necessary instruments we have at our disposal for listening and speaking; thus, the means for ethics and politics.

and the limits of thematization, what is said, are where the opportunities for freedom surface. Levinas (2011) suggests that “speech is always a taking up again of what was a simple sign cast forth by it, an ever renewed promise to clarify what was obscure in the utterance” (p. 97). I contend that it is this act of taking up which becomes important—more important than the ‘simple sign’—because it leads to freedom. How does this correspond to art? An artist speaks of the world when he or she creates and, whether she uses language directly or indirectly, her act of creation is an act of turning to face, creating space between what is proposed and what is seen or heard. This is not an interaction that forecloses language or which forecloses possibility by firmly proposing knowledge or advancing one particular ontology. Instead, encountered in the context of art for the political, the space generated in the act or performance of speaking invites plurality, discrepancy, and a sense of incompleteness.

Rancière (2007) confirms this idea of space and plurality in his analysis of artistic performance:

In all those performances, in fact, it should be a matter of linking what one knows with what one does not know, of being at the same time performers who display their competences and spectators who are looking to find what those competences might produce in a new context, among unknown people. Artists, like researchers, build the stage where the manifestation and the effect of their competences become dubious as they frame the story of a new adventure in a new idiom. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It calls for spectators who are active interpreters, who render their own translation, who appropriate the story for themselves, and who ultimately make their own story out of it. (p. 280)

Here, Rancière may be writing about performance and spectatorship, but he is more broadly drawing our attention to the possibilities for movement in the space between creator and audience. This is a space which is not limited to art and performance, but which more importantly echoes the spaces between *demos* and state. There is a political aspect to speaking, or performing, which draws on language but is also bounded by it. As with the tension in Levinas' discussions of language, here too is language at once the tool for action against hegemony or state and the point of resistance built by hegemony or state. Rancière describes humans as political animals because "we have the power to put into circulation more words, 'useless' and unnecessary words, words that exceed the function of rigid designation" but also because "this fundamental ability to proliferate words is unceasingly contested by those who claim to 'speak correctly'" (as cited in Arsenjuk, 2007, p. 2). For Rancière, then, language is both sword and shield, point and counterpoint. As such, an interruption in the form of art, which inevitably makes use of language either in inspiration, creation, or response, is able to extend a similar challenge to "those who claim to 'speak correctly'."

Arendt (1998) bases her entire model for politics on speech and action, but also relates speech and action to the creation of things for the common world. She suggests that the "'doing of great deeds and the speaking of great words' will leave no trace, no product that might endure after the moment of action and the spoken word has passed" (p. 173). What is important here is that speech and action, in the present, signify political action. They require a space to appear. Arendt (1978) describes how thinking remains invisible, even while it is being fully actualised, whereas speaking and acting necessitate appearance—that is, an outward manifestation and a witness. In her discussions of speaking

and action, Arendt (1998) also suggests that the value of the artist lies in his ability to reify and memorialise those actions and words which might otherwise be lost in the present (i.e., the memorial or informative function of art); this is a point on which I differ, arguing that in the moment of its creation, its natality, art is in itself both, speech and action. It is speaking, just as it is creation.

Finally, in this chapter on creation as a political act, I want to consider how to discern what makes an interruptive work of art as an act of ethical politics, successful. What makes interruptive art ‘great’? This is a key question because in chapter 3, I described interruptive art as a form of art in which the artist, curator or audience’s intent, or motive matters. And yet, is artist intent what is measured when one evaluates how a work of art has functioned in its role of response, call, or interpretation? To respond to this final question about the ability of art to speak and how to gauge its success as an interruption, I turn to Arendt once again. In Arendt’s (1998) discussion of action, she states that

unlike human behaviour—which the Greeks, like all civilized people, judged according to ‘moral standards,’ taking into account motives and intentions on the one hand and aims and consequences on the other—action can be judged only by the criterion of greatness because it is in its nature to break through the commonly accepted and reach into the extraordinary, where whatever is true in common and everyday life no longer applies because everything that exists is unique and *sui generis*. . . . Motives and aims, no matter how pure or how grandiose, are never unique; like psychological qualities, they are typical, characteristic of different types of persons. Greatness, therefore, or the specific meaning of each deed, can lie only

in the performance itself and neither in its motivation nor its achievement. (p. 205-206)

As such, art which calls, responds, or interprets, art which is born of the ethical and the political, tenders greatness simply in the act of its creation. The sole qualification is that in order to be considered interruptive, the artist must perceive the work as a call, a response or an interpretation; in other words, the artist must intend to act politically. The ‘greatness’ of the work of art, and the pursuant discussion on the ‘greatness’ of the artist, does not consider the artist’s particular motive or aim, as greatness is not based on the advance of one hegemony over the other. Nor does greatness rely on a particular outcome. How can art’s greatness be judged on the basis of audience response? What Arendt provides here is liberation from the tyranny of specific motive and effective outcome. She offers a way for the creation of art to be recognised as an act of freedom, with the potential to move the artist or the audience toward change. It matters not at all if the artist’s particular goals have been attained, nor if the art has in turn changed how society functions, although there are many instances where interruptive art does feature artist intent and transformational outcomes, as I will discuss in chapter 7. It matters only if the work can be considered an act, a performance, that reaches into the extraordinary.

CHAPTER 6

ART, LOVE, AND HOPE

“In emotion as in art people conjure their gods and their truths” (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004, p. 129).

If, as I have previously suggested, art is not the only means to enact an ethical politics, then why have I chosen to link it with the framework so intimately in this study? The answer is that, outside of face to face dialogue, art can offer a powerful engagement with affect. For this study, I focus on two particular aspects of the relationship between art and emotion. First, I posit that art connects ethics and political action with respect, even in the absence of love. Love, responsibility and respect make us listen. Second, I suggest that art offers an unprecedented equality of access to political action, begetting hope. Hope makes us act.

In the Absence of Love

The motive to listen to an other is complex. Levinas (1989) assigns this motive to the responsibility one innately feels for taking the place of that other in the world. He presumes that the guilt or the sense of duty born of *a priori* responsibility is sufficient to shape the asymmetric orientation and to motivate the listener into a position of humility. It is a valuable reading on the reason why one *should* listen, but it ignores the question of apathy. Surely one would be predisposed to listening if one already felt love for the other,

knew the other in some way, or was compelled toward the other because of an extant emotional connection. Yet what is the resistance to apathy in the absence of love?

Arendt (1998) offers a way to think about the affect needed to animate human action—in this case, the actions of listening and responding. She writes about love on several occasions, discussing which elements of love are useful politically (e.g., love of the world, or *amor mundi*) and which are politically irrelevant or even detrimental. Throughout her political theorising, she reveals an interest in the concept of what brings people together in a kind of political friendship. Arendt seeks:

a new public *vinculum*—or bond. A new public *vinculum* should bring people into a common mode of living without any recourse to more-or-less *naturalistic* bonds such as family, ethnicity, race, nation, the *Volk*, religion, or a shared origin of humanity. For Arendt political life does not belong to the *naturalistic*, but to the *artificial* dimension of life, and it is in this very *artificiality* that Arendt has searched for the basis of a public *vinculum* as well as of political identity. (Chiba, 1995, p. 508-509)

In line with the artificial bond, or *vinculum*, or political friendship, that Arendt pursues is her careful distinction between love and respect. Arendt (1998) determines that love collapses the space between self and other to such an extent that the spaces created are no longer politically useful. Instead, the emotion on which she relies to found her political model is respect. It is using respect that Arendt (1998) is able to ground the *vinculum* to which she aspires, noting that respect “is a kind of ‘friendship’ without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us” (p. 243). This reading of respect as the driving feeling between self

and other broadens the reach of the other from beyond the limited sphere of love, into the expansive sphere of politics. The definition of respect is in many ways founded on the principles of ‘equality of access,’ which I discuss in more detail below; it is an emotion which can manifest irrespective of whether we like or dislike the other. It is a characterisation of respect that “is independent of qualities which we may admire or of achievements which we may highly esteem” (Arendt, 1998, p. 243). Using this definition of respect, this sense of intimacy without closeness, I contend that the value of art lies in its ability to engender respect, when there is no love.

Because love does not always exist to motivate a person to listen, and because the duty implied by *a priori* responsibility fails to account for apathy, art as a medium of ethics and politics fosters an especially powerful motive to listen through its affective operations and offers the potential to generate a kind of public *vinculum*. To understand art’s implications for affect, I turn to Bennett’s (2005) work on art and trauma. She utilises a Deleuzian understanding of art as an “encountered sign” (Deleuze as cited in Bennett, 2005, p. 7) to explicate its effect on viewers. Art as an ‘encountered sign’ is first received not through recognition or cognition, but through how it is felt. It becomes a further impetus for thought and for listening. Thus, the affective operations of art are less about form and substance and more about bringing the viewer into a receptive state for thought, listening, and responding. Deleuze (2000) notes that “thought is nothing without something that forces and does violence to it. More important than thought is ‘what leads to thought’; more important than the philosopher is the poet” (p. 95). Art is powerful because when there is no love, the orientation toward the other must be engendered by respect and it is

precisely because art is an encountered sign, is directly felt, that it metaphorically ‘speaks’ to motivation. Deleuze (2000) also finds that

the truths that intelligence grasps directly in the open light of day have something less profound, less *necessary* about them than those that life has communicated to us *in spite of ourselves* in an impression, a material impression because it has reached us through our senses... (p. 95-96)

Art, when seen here as a sensory impression, becomes a profound mode of communicating because it not only contains some substance and form which require thought, but because, even more primitively, it engenders an affective response. This is perhaps why it is easier to turn away from news items about genocide than it is to watch documentaries or to view art or to listen to music expressing that particular trauma. The media pretends at the “open light of day” and is viewed with jaded cynicism. Whereas media feigns the offer of truth without taint, reality without the veneer of hegemony, art can be perceived as honest in its innate positionality.

Deleuze posits that increasing the amount of joy in one’s life leads to an increase in action (O’Sullivan, 2010); he also suggests that it is ethical to increase the joy in one’s life so that one is more prone to interactions of “becoming” with others (O’Sullivan, 2010). For the purposes of this study, I am less concerned with these ideas about joy and with Deleuzian ethics, than I am specifically with the way Deleuze frames the affective potential of art. O’Sullivan (2010) uses Deleuze to suggest that while art can certainly evoke joy, its true potential lies in how it provokes us:

Certainly the encounter with art can produce [a] kind of joy. Indeed, many [artistic] practices I mentioned above have this joy-increasing effect; there is something

fundamentally affirming of life and of creativity within them. However, the same work ... also operates to undo, or to break with, typical ways of thinking and feeling. Indeed, the work's work is often about stymieing any agreement or simple 'understanding'. (p. 198)

I am not convinced that art opens us up to joy any more than sadness, but I do concur with O'Sullivan's assertion that art can 'speak' to affect in a more direct way than other forms of interaction. Artists offer insight and a naked positionality that necessarily involves affect—their own and the response elicited by their work. These artists “offer up new compositions of affect, new affective assemblages that are different to those we are more familiar with” and “it is this that differentiates art, as a specific form of thought, from mere opinion (a more habitual assemblage and one tied to a certain ‘common sense’)” (O'Sullivan, 2010, p. 199). The fact that art works as an encountered sign, is felt more than thought, leaves us potentially more open and more receptive than we might otherwise be to the ruptures of interaction with the other.

The connection here, made between art and affect and the orientation for an encounter with the other, is important because it advances the idea that art can perform an ethicopolitical function and that it can be especially effective because it is felt rather than understood. The linkages between art, affect and the ethicopolitical are also important because they invite a sense of futurity that breaks from the moment of the present and toward something that may be. Once again, art draws on affect: by refraining from offering “a reassuring mirror reflection of a subjectivity already in place” (O'Sullivan, 2010, p. 200), art liberates us from the tyranny of a future defined by the present and leaves us

uncertain. It is a sense of uncertainty which evokes a sense of the possible. Put another way, it is an uncertainty which emanates the fragile light of hope.

Hope and Equality of Access

I have previously described how the ethicopolitical framework using Arendt, Levinas, and Rancière embodies a sense of hopefulness. This process for ethics and politics is based on a person's innate ability to begin and, in beginning, to transform his or her world infinitely. Using art as an expression of that framework lends an even greater sense of possibility to political action. First, I present an overview of what hope is, in the context of the individual and society. I then extend the analysis to discuss how art, by providing equality of access, as an ethicopolitical action begets 'responsive hope'.

Hope can be tricky. Considering its recognised value as a source of human agency, it can be remarkably difficult to define (McGeer, 2004). Is it an emotion, a cognitive capacity, or a psychological phenomenon? And, moreover, what does hope provide? How is it tied to agency? For this study, I will address the second and third questions. Hope is significant for motivating the decision to act in much the same way as love, respect, and responsibility stimulate the desire to listen. Hope provides:

a way of actively confronting, exploring, and sometimes patiently biding our limitations as agents, rather than crumpling in the face of their reality. Thus, hope in the limit case is still about taking an agential interest in the future and in the opportunities it may afford. It is about saying the following: although there may be nothing we can do now to bring about what we desire, our energy is still oriented toward the future, limitations notwithstanding. Our interests, our concerns, our

desires, our passions—all of these continue to be engaged by what can be; hence, we lean into the future ready to act when actions can do some good (McGeer, 2004, p. 104)

Hope is a way of living with the sometimes ugly confines of our daily realities, while maintaining a sense of leaning toward the future. It “is the acknowledgement of more openness in a situation than the situation easily reveals; openness above all to possibilities for human attachments, expressions and assertions” (Simon, 1992, p. 3). It is not a phenomenon of delusion or wishful thinking, but is indicative of an openness to possibilities for change. Hoping is not wishing because it is not bounded by what we know or burdened by the tedium of *what is* in our world. O’Sullivan (2010) tells us that art can liberate us from the emotions of the everyday, of ‘common sense’ just as Simon (1992) determines that hope liberates us from the “taken-for-granted realities and routines” (p. 3) by forcing us to cleave from them in imagining something new. Hope is not a wish toward pleasure; and it is not “a passive yearning for ultimate peace and resolution” (p. 4). It is far more nebulous than a wish, and it opens itself before knowing to what it is open.

McGeer (2004) defines this openness, this positive, forward-inclined manifestation of hope as “responsive hope” or the “hope of care” (p. 122). McGeer finds that responsive hope takes what is otherwise broken, a system of inequality, and brings to bear a sense of emancipatory purpose. It is this iteration of hope which finds synchronicity with the ethicopolitical framework I propagate because it is an expression of hope that is founded on two aspects: first, inherent hopefulness and the hoper’s capacity for action, which is in keeping with the importance of singular action for ethics and politics; second, it is a manifestation of hope which is reliant on a responsive world, an ethically compelled other,

who can buoy or sustain the momentum for change by listening and responding in his or her own right. Thus, hope builds exponentially: as actors “develop in themselves an individual capacity for hoping well, they are committed to building the kind of community in which collective hopes would naturally arise” (McGeer, 2004, p. 125). In this way, hope is neither the prerogative of the individual, nor is it the reward of the majority; it is a trembling, fragile yet tensile tether to the future that relies, at once, on the individual and on the other.

Having argued the connection between hope and action, I now suggest that art offers a strong sense of hope, because it offers equality of access to repartition what is visible and invisible. As noted in chapter 1, Rancière’s concept of active equality allows for broad participation. It suggests that, contrary to feeling like one of many, everyone has the singular ability to enact change. This ties into what I consider equality of access because, in congruence with the broad participatory range for political actors Rancière describes, art can be created by anyone who is so inclined. Art neither requires power, nor eloquence, nor money. May (2008a) notes that according to Rancière’s conception of politics, the juncture where aesthetics and politics meet

is where literature, and the arts more generally, become political, and where [artists] can participate in imagining a community of equals. We should not think of the arts, for Rancière, as an avant-garde, in the sense that they mark out a path for others to follow. Art ought not, any more than political organizing, to consist in a group of leaders who show the way for everyone else to follow. ... Art does not lead; rather, it intervenes on the partition of the sensible by challenging it or offering other partitions to stand alongside it. (p. 87)

That art does not lead, and that it does not require a leader who is persuading others to follow, is an innately hopeful construct. It suggests that one does not need to feel a sense of political entitlement or socioeconomic power in order to find a voice. It also extends hope to those who might be otherwise hopeless, living with “the police orders that are the ether of our lives...[and] through hopelessness, complacency, fear” (May, 2008b, p. 143), by suggesting that their voices can not only be heard, but that they can effect change.

The other aspect of art which invokes a sense of hopefulness and which is also an expression of Rancière’s ideal of equality, is that “all lives can merit artistic treatment, not just those of the elites” (May, 2008a, p. 89). This means that even those people occupying the edges of the *demos* will find themselves worthy of artistic representation and will encounter equal access to the freedom of expression that can redefine their context. The inclusion of all voices in who can speak and who is represented in the act of speaking (or, in this case, in the creation of art and its content) is an interesting extension of Rancière’s fundamental interpretation of equality. Unlike Marx, who focuses on one mode of inequality—exploitation, Rancière furnishes an altogether looser and more flexible definition of inequality that can be based on a range of factors and that can be experienced in various forms by anyone (May, 2008a). Rancière offers an equality of inequality. He renders inequality accessible to everyone and, by doing so, opens every person to the potential for enacting democracy.

Finally, Rancière’s perception of equality invites hopefulness in the way that it defines acts for equality not on the basis of accomplishment or outcome. Instead of seeking equality as an end or horizon point, Rancière offers a vision for an approach toward equality that is surprisingly reminiscent of Levinas’ work on listening, knowledge, and

wisdom. The political actor, just as the listener, advances toward wisdom in the irreversible stance of learner, and with the desire for what is always to come. Speaking in an explicitly educational context in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière (1991) confirms this point of view by stating that “never will the student catch up with the master, nor the people with its enlightened elite; but the hope of getting there makes them advance along the good road, the one of perfected explications” (p. 120). This is a gesture to hope, certainly, but also a warning that to act for equality is to strive for an impossible outcome. Hope is not nourished by certainty, but by the constant and continuous beyond that moves us to act politically, to take yet another step. This action is a movement, always oriented toward the future and toward infinity, that is perpetually incomplete. It is a movement that never finds a destination but that nonetheless continues to persist. It is on these acts for democracy using art, these movements of turning toward—what I have previously termed art for the political or interruptive art—that the remainder of this study will focus.

CHAPTER 7

ART AND THE ARTIST, TOWARD

“The poetry of the streets is another form of writing, of redrafting the script of history in the here and now—with no assurances of victory, and everything in the balance.” (Colla, 2012, p. 52)

I think right now is the moment. This is the beginning. We don’t know what it is the moment of, and maybe something much crazier will happen. But, really, we see the sunshine coming in. It was clouded for maybe a hundred years. Our whole condition was very sad, but we still feel warmth, and the life in our bodies can still tell that there is excitement in there, even though death is waiting. We had better not enjoy the moment, but create the moment. ... Because we’re actually a part of reality, and if we don’t realize that, we are totally irresponsible. We are a productive reality. We are the reality, but that part of reality means that we need to produce another reality. (Ai Weiwei as quoted in Obrist, 2011, Digital Architecture: Analogue Architecture section, p. 5-6)

The ethicopolitical framework I have this far constructed is animated by political actors and artists. In this chapter, I investigate a specific example of how an artist employs his art in contemporary contexts to promote change, both nuanced and radical. I analyse the film *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* (Klayman, 2012) with a focus on Ai Weiwei and the work he creates in resistance to dominant, state-sanctioned hegemonic discourses in China. I start by

providing a brief overview of the content of the film, including the focus on Ai Weiwei's family, his art, and his political actions. I focus on three key sections based on the framework I delineated in previous chapters to analyse Ai as an artist as depicted in the film. First, I examine evidence of listening in accordance with Levinas' understandings and look for instances of listening leading to inspiration. Second, I seek examples of speaking from the *demos*, construed as political action by Rancière. Here, I am particularly interested in the spaces created for politics between self and state. Third, I investigate contexts where the common world is noticeably absent or where it is being actively sought or built. The goal of this case study is to illustrate how Ai works as an artist to interrupt, frequently creating art for the political to bring about change. A secondary aim is to show how Klayman, as director, is an artist in her own right who makes creative choices that emphasize Ai's various capacities as a political actor. As such, a considerable portion of this analysis makes reference to the content of the documentary. I will, however, also comment on the director's artistic decisions as they coincide with the framework. To conclude the analysis, I will step away from the study of Ai as an actor and the documentary to examine the potential for his work to stand as a call to the other by more closely analysing two key exhibitions.

The Advantages and Limitations of Case Studies

There is space between me and the world I study. I am not an insider, but an observer. I am a guest. I make my way into this world mostly through the lens of film and, occasionally, with the supplement of articles and stories. I draw from another listener's (i.e., filmmaker's) impressions of the artist and from the artist himself as he is presented in

the film. In this work and in my position as researcher, I strive at all times to retain my humility as a listener. I recognise before beginning that this world exceeds me; more specifically, this case study exceeds me. And yet, I must listen. I am responsible for the other. The following case study is thus presented from the position of apology, “where the I at once affirms itself and inclines [itself]” (Levinas, 2011, p. 40). I listen to affirm my limits and speak in deference to the other who has called to me and put me into question.

This approach toward qualitative analysis of case studies is marked by my interpretation of the impressions the case has made upon me as a listener. I can neither pretend to truth nor completeness. As Stake (1995) suggests, to perform qualitative analysis on a case study is when, as a researcher, “I put [my analysis] forward as my interpretation. ... I do not seek to describe the world or even to describe fully the case” (p. 76). I am always on the outside; no level of research, listening, reading, or witnessing is ever going to provide mastery of the other’s alterity. That is not the aim of this work. I do not seek to represent the entirety of the complexity of sociopolitics in China, as this is not a study of the history or politics which comprise either of those two contexts. Instead, I offer a glimpse into what I contend best represents art as a manifestation of an ethical politics, based on the actions of the individual and the orientation toward the other. I do not pretend at expertise or inside knowledge of either the life of the other or the whole effect of his art on the world. And this is certainly not a study of contemporary geopolitics. So what authorises me to use this example as a case study and to reflect on the experiences of the other? To answer, I offer Quattrone’s (2006) explanation of the usefulness of case studies in keeping with an ethics founded on the other:

if a narration cannot represent a world out there then the researcher needs to effect a shift in the knowledge offered: from a purely epistemological realm of representation of what is Other respect to the researcher, to an ethical dimension ... where this Other is ineludibly absent from the story but needs to be given voice and thus authorizes the narrator to speak. (p. 145)

The ethicopolitical framework I advocate is premised on the other. This other does not speak here directly, but has spoken to me through art and through the materials which comprise this research. Presently, in acknowledgement of my new boundaries of consciousness, I am authorised to respond.

A further potential limitation lies with the use of a single example, instead of the examination of a larger sample of case studies. Once again, I make this decision purposefully. I am not relying on case studies to compile statistics or to create rules. The ethical foundation of my research is incompatible with the idea that behavioural science can be used to create absolutes or promote conformity. In keeping with Arendt's (1998) assertion that behavioural sciences "aim to reduce man as a whole, in all his activities, to the level of a conditioned and behaving animal" (p. 45), I posit that the desire for large sample sizes, for generalisability, or validity are entirely foreign to the aims of this observer. Instead, I see case studies as a window into a particular moment in time or a collection of events that have some similitude. George and Bennett (2005) offer some clarity on how to select the material for a case study, noting "a case study is thus a well-defined aspect of a historical episode that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than a historical event itself" and that "a researcher's decision about which class of events to study and which theories to use determines what data ... are relevant to her or his case study of it"

(p. 18). This approach leaves me open to the critique of selection bias, but I argue that since the nature of case study is “somewhat intuitive” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 5) to begin with, it is pretence to suggest that I have chosen this case for anything other than its explicit reflection of art as interruption.

Documentary as Art

I have also chosen to use a documentary as the central construct of my case study. I do this with intention, since the documentary not only features interruptive art and the artist who creates it, but can also stand as a work of art in and of itself. Whether the documentary, in film or in photograph, can be considered art has been the subject of much discussion over the years (Corner, 1996, 2005; Finnegan, 2001; Roberts, 1998). Corner (2005) suggests that the documentary can often unwittingly represent aesthetic qualities, even as it strives to be reportorial or observational. In other circumstances, the documentary may offer “extremely self-conscious and aesthetically ambitious” (Corner, 2005, p. 49) elements to the viewer. It is a medium which allows for some flexibility in both how it is created and in how it is perceived. This complexity lends itself very well to the project at hand because the documentary, much like the subjects it represents, defies categorisation. It does not fall neatly into the framework of art, and there are many critics and detractors who claim that the realism offered through documentary can be a challenge for interpretation and witnessing (see chapter 2 for some critique from Sontag [1977] and Maclear [1999]). And yet, it cannot be considered wholly representational either; it is not ‘news.’ There is a narrative tension embedded within the documentary as a form, a back-and-forthness

between art and information, which lends this medium well to analysis based on an ethicopolitical framework that also incorporates various dichotomies.

That documentary is a useful art form for this research is not only because of the tension between its form as art versus information, but also because of the push-pull within its content: its presentation of truth and its openness to interpretation. The documentary offers, on the one hand some legitimacy for ‘fact’ without the affectation of truth. It often captures moments of someone’s experiences and presents them for viewing from across the distance of the medium. Yet it also offers a certain measure of creativity and interpretation which figure it as an art form in its own right. As noted in chapter 2, the director as artist controls the content of what is included, what is on the cutting room floor, what is said in voiceover, and what is shot. The director also has control over the manner in which the ‘realities’ of experience are displayed, through angles, lighting, music, and more. The mood is entirely subjective, rendering the ‘facts’ on display wholly open to interpretation. The dual nature of the documentary is apparent: “as a practice and a form, documentary is strongly informationalist (and therefore requires a level of ‘accuracy’) but it is also an exercise in creativity, an art form drawing on interpretive imagination” (Corner, 1996, p. 15). It is in complement to this duality that I intend to analyse the example below.

Setting the Stage: Art and the Politics of Art in China

Before advancing Ai Weiwei as an example of an artist for the political, it is useful to understand some aspects of how art is positioned in modern China. While this is not the focus of the study, it is important to have some background against which Ai Weiwei’s art and voice as a political actor and dissident artist can be held in relief.

In China, a society with rigid structures in place to censor free speech, art is almost categorically delineated into that which conforms and that which does not. In 1949, the Chinese began to follow a Soviet model for the control and exploitation of the arts (Zhang, 2014); since then, and especially during the Cultural Revolution, art has been heavily regulated, positioned as an influential tool for educating and subjugating the masses (Galikowski, 1990; Keane, 2013; Mittler, 2003; Zhang, 2014). During the Cultural Revolution, the constraints placed on art were extensive. Mao Zedong, in his famed *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art* (1942), spoke about the power and importance of art for politics. Mao (1942) sought:

to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind. (para. 2)

To these ends, all art fell under the control of the government. There was no room for “private” or “unofficial” art (Zhang, 2014, p. 830). As Mittler (2003) notes, art became less about expression of self and more about creating a monoculture. It was a “gigantic and in many ways destructive attempt to establish one and only one acceptable artistic taste for all and everyone” (Mittler, 2003, p. 55) in the name of harmony and in order to facilitate control.

Post-Cultural Revolution, in the 1980s, there emerged a burgeoning group of independent artists who sought to establish communities where they could begin to practise art that was not officially sanctioned by the government (Zhang, 2014). The government considered these artists as “troublesome” and viewed their communities with suspicion:

“Politically and socially marginalized, [the artists] often lived together on the fringes of society in artist villages (huajiacun 画家村), where they have frequently faced the threat of being displaced, either owing to political repression or urban renewal” (Zhang, 2014, p. 828). One of the key communities, Yuanmingyuan, was raided in 1995, and the artists were evicted or jailed. Since then two other communities have emerged to replace it. The Chinese government has decided to allow these two newer communities to remain; this has not been done, as Zhang (2014) observes, because China is opening up to artistic independence, but because the government sees these two “art districts” as promising marketing tools. To that end, art festivals held at these locations are less forums for the exchange of ideas between artists and the public, and more “showcases through which the local government promotes the district’s ‘brand’” (Zhang, 2014, p. 838). The government’s current approach to mechanisms of control includes: districting, controlling the space for art; quarantine, restricting what gets published; and co-optation, bringing previously dissident artists into the fold (Zhang, 2014). The districts have largely become caricatures of artistic freedom, promoting a superficially open and creative Chinese face to the Western world while still being effectively controlled and curtailed by government propaganda officials.

In recent years, political influences over art waned only to have commercial interests and advertising grow in popularity. Keane (2013) notes that in modern China creativity is harmonized, stripped of profane elements, and turned into economy. It is accorded a supporting role at the high altar of soft power. Culture too is increasingly secularized and industrialized. Its products are endless: films,

paintings, carpets, souvenirs, theme parks, ceramics, books, magazines, acrobatic troupes, minority dances, operas, cartoons, fashion garments, buildings, malls, precincts, video games, CDs, advertisements, toys, furniture ... the list goes on.

(Introduction section, para. 4)

In addition to the potential exploitation of the arts as a means of creating soft power⁶ and economising culture, there has also been a reassertion of state control over art and the messages it propagates. In *The Economist* ("The Art is Red," December 20, 2014), the author notes:

During the [Communist] party's rule, propaganda art has always been a feature of the urban landscape. But in recent years it has been relegated to the margins by the onslaught of commercial advertising. President Xi Jinping has been trying to revive it. Propaganda posters are now everywhere: on fences around construction sites, billboards and walls. The party is waging a low-tech, old-fashioned campaign to sell itself. At the same time it is tightening its grip on creative endeavours that do not have the party's welfare in mind. (p. 65)

The voices of dissident artists have been pressured into near silence as the state moves to close the spaces for free expression and speech. Other artists find themselves trapped in a system of culture as culture as commerce or propaganda as the government becomes more adept at using districting, quarantine, and co-optation to exert control while presenting a

⁶ Keane (2013) defines 'soft power' as the ability for a country to describes the capacity of a nation to exert influence aside from the traditional 'hard powers' of military and government. This soft power includes innovation, creativity, and culture.

facade of openness⁷. In this environment of restricted free speech and expression, one can clearly perceive art is accorded a powerful voice in influencing people's values, interests, and beliefs. It is a context of overt state control and domination which foments dissent even as it seeks to quell it.

Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry

Overview

At the heart of this case study is the controversial artist Ai Weiwei. The primary material for this analysis is the film *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* (Klayman, 2012), which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2012 and screened across numerous festivals globally from 2012 to 2013, including in the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, India, Croatia, and Taiwan. In 2013, the film also screened at several art galleries and colleges across North America. The documentary was well received, winning numerous accolades and awards, including the Sundance Film Festival Jury Prize. It is currently available for rent, purchase, or steaming on iTunes, Amazon, and Netflix. The documentary follows Ai Weiwei for three years, from 2008 to 2011, as he navigates the difficult and dangerous position of an artist, dissident, and political activist in contemporary China. While the artist is the focus of the movie, with several discussions of his key works, there is also some exploration of Ai Weiwei as a person and a political actor. In this analysis, besides making

⁷ The efficacy of these strategies is evident. Zhang (2014) describes how Factory 798, one of the two new art districts that opened after the demolition of Yuanmingyuan, has been cited as one of the world's "Top 22 most vibrant art districts." Zhang (2014) also notes that "many foreign officials visited Factory 798, including Viviane Reding, the European Union's minister of culture, who cited the area as proof that China was opening up, much to the delight of Chinese politicians" (p. 834).

a case for Ai as an artist for the political, I am also suggesting that the documentary *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* is itself an example of a work of art that interrupts in some way. This film was created in collaboration between two small studios: United Expression Media, a studio linked directly to Ai Weiwei as a subset of the organisation, Friends of Free Expression (Friends of Free Expression, 2014, Return Policy section); and Muse Film and Television, a non-profit studio committed to creating “quality films on visual art and culture” (Muse Film and Television, 2014, Home section). The director, Alison Klayman, who was working in China as a journalist during the filming of the documentary, was granted “unprecedented access” to Ai (“Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry,” 2012, Home section). She investigates his personal and family background, briefly providing insight into his relationships with his father, mother, wife, and son. She also traces his biographical journey as an artist, beginning with the years he spent in a labour camp with his poet father, to his years as an art student in New York, to his first commercially successful artworks in China as the architect of the Bird’s Nest Stadium for the Beijing Olympics. The third aspect of the film, which is intimately entwined with his work as an artist, depicts his ongoing efforts as a political activist seeking democracy in China. The film weaves through these three narratives to create a portrait of the artist, his work, his inspiration, and his goals.

Klayman touches on several aspects of Ai’s family and familial history, beginning with an investigation of his childhood. Klayman notes that Ai Weiwei’s father, Ai Qing, was a poet and a political dissident in his own right. Ai Qing studied in France but later returned to China. After speaking out against the Communist party, Ai Qing and his family (including Ai Weiwei) were banished to a labour camp for 19 years of “re-education through labor” (Klayman, 2012, 17:19). The years spent on the outside of society, in the

isolation of the camp, are depicted as highly influential to Ai's later career as an artist. One of the Chinese filmmakers interviewed, Gu Changwei, states that "[Ai] is like his father ... He was also an opinionated and romantic artist" (Klayman, 2012, 16:33). Ai's father was beaten and humiliated, and attempted suicide many times. The illness and subsequent death of Ai's father is cited as one of the reasons for his return to China from studying abroad. The film also features Ai's mother, who is interviewed directly and features peripherally in several scenes. While she is proud and supportive of his work, she also clearly worries for her son and his safety. Klayman briefly interviews Ai's wife, Lu Qing, who is an artist in her own right. She notes that as artists, their "life and work are mixed together" (Klayman, 2012, 25:08); later in the film, it is revealed that Ai has a young son with another woman. He is shown interacting with his son, both in China and then later, at a show in London, England.

Ai's political activism is highlighted in a number of ways, but the film focuses on a key event which occurred when he was filming his own documentary about a friend's trial in Chengdu. Initially, evidence of his political activism is centred on his response to the government's handling of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Ai is shown gathering names of children who died in the earthquake. He does this as an act of commemoration, but also as a critique to the government. This action blends into art as he compiles the lists for exhibition. Later, Ai visits Chengdu to testify for another political activist, Tan Zuoren, who was arrested after working with earthquake survivors to collect names of victims. While he is in Chengdu, Ai films a documentary, *Lao Ma Ti Hua*, which he later freely distributes online. During the filming, Ai and the members of his team are followed by police and then accosted in the middle of the night. Klayman uses the footage shot by Ai

during that night to present the encounter between Ai and the police, including the details of Ai's assault and subsequent hospitalisation. Ai is detained by the police just long enough to render it impossible for him to testify at Tan's trial. Tan is found guilty and is sentenced to five years in prison. This violent interaction with the police becomes a catalyst for further, more overt, political action. Ai tweets from the hospital, recording details of his hospital charts, injuries, and surgery. He follows this up with a visit to the Chengdu police to report the assault. This initial visit to the police station shows the guarded and cautious manner in which the police treat Ai when the cameras are rolling (and presumably when foreigners are present). During succeeding visits, however, Ai becomes more assertive in his quest to file a report. He revisits the Chengdu station a second time, meets the assaulting officer and snatches the glasses off his face in an effort to expose his identity. These are key actions that occur within the apparatus of the state. In addition to this, Ai tweets and blogs extensively about his experiences with the government. These actions are arguably acts from without, from outside the state, because they cannot be censored or controlled in the same manner as his official, legal complaint. Toward the end of the documentary, Ai's studio, initially slated to open in 2011, is demolished by the government. Ai is then detained by the police for 81 days without warning. Upon his release, he is prohibited from giving interviews, blogging or tweeting. The government fines Ai US\$ 2.4 million and his supporters begin to donate money immediately. After a spell, Ai resumes tweeting and blogging.

Ai's work as an artist weaves into the narrative, uniting the stories of his background and political activism. Ai began to receive attention as a mainstream artist

when he started working as an architect on Beijing's Bird's Nest Stadium. This is an effort Ai later denounces, claiming that he is:

not for a kind of Olympics that forces the migrants out of the city. To tell ordinary citizens they should not participate. But they just make a 'fake smile' for the foreigners, and become purely Party's propaganda ... which is very scary.

(Klayman, 2012, 8:30)

The remainder of the film concentrates on his creations as an artist for the political, working against the government rather than for it. One of the first exhibits featured in the film of this art for the political is linked with his work on the earthquake, which he undertook after learning that many of the 70 000 dead were children in "poorly built government schools" (Klayman, 2012, 10:37). Ai collects the names of the dead children, and mounts them on a wall and on his blog in a display simply titled, *The Sichuan Earthquake Names Project*. In reaction, the government shuts down his blog and installs surveillance cameras around his home. Ai then begins using Twitter. Later, he creates an enormous exhibit on the outside of a museum wall in Munich, titled *Remembering*. It features 9000 backpacks arranged to spell "She lived happily on this earth for seven years". The quote, taken from one grieving mother's letter about her deceased seven-year-old daughter, stands as a forceful reminder of the many children who died during the earthquake and as a critique of the government that allowed it to happen. Other works featured in the film include a series of photographs, *Study of Perspective*, taken between 1995 and 2003, showing Ai's raised middle finger in the foreground, and various state spaces and monuments in the background. The images in the background include Tiananmen Square, the Eiffel Tower, and the White House. The image with Tiananmen

Square is also used as the background for every page of the film's official website. In detailing Ai's emergence as an artist of the "underground," someone working outside the government-sanctioned spaces in galleries, Klayman also describes Ai's *Black Cover Book*, *White Cover Book*, and *Grey Cover Book* publications and his organisation of the subsequent *Uncooperative Attitude / FUCK OFF* exhibit in 2000. One of the key works featured in the film is located at the Tate Modern gallery in London, where Ai sets up an installation of over 100 million porcelain sunflower seeds, painted by 1600 Chinese artisans. The work is titled *Sunflower Seeds*.

Listening

The documentary provides some insight into what it means to create art for the political by featuring one man's acts toward freedom. There are several examples throughout the film of Ai listening, in the Levinasian sense, and having his sense of self shatter in response to the other⁸. There are also examples of Ai as teacher, when other potential political actors listen to Ai, witness his work, and become inspired to act in their own creation of new political subjectivities.

Ai as listener. The first break into Ai's circle of totality, the first evidence of him as a listener in the film, occurs shortly after the Sichuan earthquake. At first, Ai is stirred

⁸ I approach this section of the analysis with the understanding that Levinasian listening, comprised of 'I' and other "cannot be included within a network of relations visible to a third party" because "if this bond ... could be entirely apprehended from the outside it would suppress, under the gaze that encompassed it, the very multiplicity bound with [it]" (Levinas, 2011, p. 121). Thus, my study of Ai as listener does not aim to know what existed as the content or nature of the bond between him and others, but more simply as a witness to an interaction that reveals Ai's disposition as a listener in the Levinasian sense.

beyond himself and beyond a sense of complacency by what he watches on television. In response to the question of what inspired him to create “The Sichuan Earthquake Names Project,” Klayman shows footage of the earthquake. There are screaming mothers, demolished buildings, and young children calling for help from the balconies of precariously erect buildings. The film redirects to Ai who acknowledges that the event interrupted his consciousness to such an extent that he was silenced: he stopped writing in his daily blog for a week and admits that he “simply could not write” because the earthquake was “devastating” and left him “speechless.” Once again, Klayman cuts to earthquake footage. It is a technique that mimics the back and forth of dialogue. The interposing of real footage with the responses from Ai as to what inspired his work suggests that he listened and was broken. Faced with footage from the earthquake, Ai is called to continue listening, keep turning toward. He is also inspired to act by Tan Zuoren, an earthquake activist in Chengdu, who is also collecting names of dead students. As he begins to visit the sites devastated by the earthquake, footage is replaced with a more immediate and puissant other: conversations with victims and relatives. In collecting names, Ai becomes a listener to their stories, never claiming to understand or describe their suffering, but only seeking to listen. His response to this other is offered in the way of apology—just as Levinas suggests. Ai does not claim to know the other’s suffering but can draw attention to the limits of his own consciousness. This is done through his exhibit of the names of the dead. He avoids appropriation of suffering or the false claim of empathy. He simply lists the names in what becomes a horrific visualisation of the magnitude of the disaster.

Ai's reliance on the other is not only evident in his inspiration but also in the execution of the art he creates. He conceives of installations and exhibits, but often uses a team of assistants to varying extents to construct the work. In the opening scenes of the film, we see teams of people at work building his *Grapes* piece using old stools. For the display in Munich, a whole team collaborates to build pieces inside and outside the gallery. His Tate Modern installation invites 1600 artisans to paint ceramic sunflower seeds in order to produce the requisite 100 million seeds for display.

As much as Ai depends on the other for his art, he does not look to this other for absolute knowledge. He is not seeking facts as a conduit to an "intuition of truth ... that gratifies a longing for the being as object"; neither is he, in listening, "seeking a hold on being which equals a constitution of that being" (Levinas, 1989, p. 79). What the audience becomes aware of in the documentary is that in his approach as an artist, Ai is willing to question constantly, even when that means breaking his own certainty. This is apparent in the language he uses to describe some of his more impactful encounters with other. For example, when fellow artists describe their time with Ai in New York, they do not claim that he sought knowledge or to make money, or even to find a better job upon his return to China. Zhang Hongtu, a New York-based artist, insists that he and Ai were committed, not to building upon and extending the traditions of knowledge from their Chinese education, but to experiencing something new. Of their time in New York, Zhang says, "We have to have an open mind. We have to make room for new stuff" (Klayman, 2012, 46:31). Ai spoke English and visited museums in New York; these were not acts of cultural appropriation, but were symbols of his openness to the other. He was willing to receive. To be silent. And to become less certain of himself. Hsieh Tehching, a performance artist who

lived as Ai's roommate in New York echoes this sentiment by saying "Why did Weiwei and I come to New York? We came here to have this great collision, so to speak" (Klayman, 2012, 47:00). Klayman depicts these 'collisions' visually. While these artists are being interviewed, the director cuts to black and white photographs of Ai in New York. Each new image shakes violently in transition to other images. The effect, alongside the music playing in the background, is jarring. The edges of the frames are blurred. Images surface in and out of focus. The director jolts the viewer in much the same way as Ai's own certainty and assurances about life must have been subject to fracture at the time.

This sense of tenuousness and vulnerability pervades the film. Ai's time in New York, his time as a student, is not his only time as a learner. Even in his response to the other's anguish after the Sichuan earthquake, Ai does not rush to document carnage or pretend to understand the fierce suffering through visual depictions. He does not propose new policies or advocate for changes to official laws. Ai is shown as someone who learns about the other by constantly seeking, looking, and listening. He does not move toward "*becoming* in which presence occurs or is foreseen" (Levinas, 1989, p. 77)—there is no solution proposed by either Ai or Klayman on how to enact democracy in China; rather, Ai is always listening and acting in response, always treading uncertain ground. When asked about the political impact of his work and about being named Most Powerful Artist by Art Magazine in 2011, Ai's comments reveal a mindset based on the quest for delicate wisdom over sturdy knowledge and hegemony. He says, "I don't feel powerful at all. ... Maybe being powerful means to be fragile" (Klayman, 2012, 1:27:42). Ai is not looking for recognition as a powerful and knowledgeable man, but is constantly compelled to search by a sense of imperfection. He does not fear the breaks of certainty when faced with the other,

but is glad of them, excited by them. Evan Osnos, China correspondent for *The New Yorker*, asserts that Ai's motivation is based on a perpetual sense that the status quo is not good enough. As an artist and activist, Ai is summoned to the other, and is compelled to respond through his writing, blog, Twitter, photography, documentary, and gallery exhibits. Ai acknowledges that he uses art to "get through" and "reach out" (Klayman, 2012, 57:40) because he inherently believes in the possibility of something better for the future. "I think I'm actually an eternal optimist," Ai says in discussing why he persists with his controversial projects, "I think optimism is whether you are still exhilarated by life, whether you are curious, whether you still believe there is possibility" (Klayman, 2012, 1:02:33). This reveals that Ai, just like a Levinasian listener, is obliged to listen and be open to the imminent possibilities necessitated by the face of the other. This manifests the original tension between knowledge and wisdom. To remain curious, as Ai does, is to know that one does not know. It is to persist, despite the impossibility of fruition, in the work of becoming wise. Ai's allusion to curiosity is significant because it signals that he is not listening with a prescribed goal in mind. Ai's curiosity is an expression of the *mauvaise conscience*, that which "has no intention, or aims, and cannot avail itself of the protective mask of a character contemplating in the mirror of the world a reassured and self-positing portrait" (Levinas, 1989, p. 81).

Klayman integrates this sense of ambiguity into her own artistic decisions as a filmmaker. She states that her approach to filming was to fade into the background: "once I was in [Ai's] orbit it felt relatively natural to be a fly-on-the-wall camera there" (Goodavage, 2013). Using this approach, Klayman is able to capture the unease and vulnerability of Ai's position. Klayman shoots many scenes using handheld cameras

(Natusch & Hawkins, 2014). She also shoots movement: people walking to and fro, and filming scenery streaming past a car window. She uses montage frequently and also shifts abruptly between time frames and spaces. In their more empirical analysis of *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*, Natusch and Hawkins (2014) observe:

Montage is the predominant focus. Series of fragmentary images (montages) occur as exemplified in the stills of vivid red and green vases, the bicycle installation and the blue arm sculpture. ... Poetic nuances are also revealed in the framing of shots, illustrated by the director's partial framing of Ai Weiwei's face with no eyes, only showing his mouth. ... Klayman deftly edits a montage of archival family and historical stills to visually illustrate the factual side of his family history. Abrupt shifts of time and space (temporal and spatial juxtapositions) consistently occur between, for example, Ai Weiwei's Chengdu hotel room and his art exhibition preparation in Munich. (p. 109)

I suggest that by employing these techniques, Klayman moves the audience onto shaky ground, constantly moving and searching, and constantly being forced from the comforts of having a full grasp of “the otherness of the known” (Levinas, 1989, p. 76). Her choices as a director move us closer to experiencing our own sense of disorientation when faced with that which is interminably and irrevocably beyond the horizon.

Ai as Teacher. In addition to his moments as a listener, there are also examples in the film when Ai functions as a teacher to others who are seeking their own political subjectivities. At the start of the film, Ai tells a story about his cats which acts an allegory for his own efforts:

Let's start. We have a lot of dogs and cats. Out of the 40 cats, one knows how to open doors. Where did this intelligence come from? All the other cats watch us open the door. So, I was thinking, if I never met this cat that can open doors, I wouldn't know cats could open doors. The biggest difference between people and cats is that cats will open the door, but they will never close it behind them.

(Klayman, 2012, 1:32)

The cat does not open the doors in order to teach other cats, but his action teaches nonetheless. Ai does not become a teacher to others because of the wealth, fame, or position that his art brings. These are qualities which may evolve alongside his efforts, but are not the goal of his work. Ai is the cat who opens the door. He is the actor who faces others and forces them beyond the comforts of completeness. At this point, I ought to clarify that Ai does not become teacher because he reverses his role from listener to speaker—Levinas clearly states that listening is not turn-taking (Gibbs, 2000) and that “he who speaks to me and across the words proposes himself to me, retains the fundamental foreign-ness of the Other who judges me; our relations are never reversible” (Levinas, 2011, p. 101). Ai is, as described above, always a listener. But to those he and his artwork faces, he is the other who ‘speaks to me’ and ‘proposes himself to me.’ The power of Ai’s artwork lies not in its content, not what it tells or what it teaches, but in its provocation to think, to respond, and to act. Karen Smith, writer and curator, says, “In Weiwei’s work the influences are not visual as much as conceptual... [His work contemplates] how to get people to appreciate that they are or can be individuals within the society.” (Klayman, 2012, 28:00). Ai’s role as speaker, as teacher, is elaborated through his work, and through how Klayman depicts others viewing his work. Ai notes that his Munich exhibit is his most

challenging, both in terms of scale and complexity. The pieces are often enormous and Klayman shoots several scenes of visitors staring up at the displays, walking around them, and contemplating them from below. In this way, we are reminded that the listener-speaker relationship is an asymmetrical one: “the other speaks to me from above, from a HEIGHT” (capitals in original, Gibbs, 2000, p. 33). There are also several scenes (Klayman, 2012, 37:00, 38:23, 1:07:33) when Klayman films Ai from below, at a slight angle. This puts the viewer in the position of a listener, and Ai in the literal and metaphorical position of speaker from above. More explicitly, his followers refer to him as “Teacher Ai” (Klayman, 2012, 41:00, 56:00) more than once in the film.

Through his words and deeds as an artist and political activist, Ai becomes a teacher and an inspiration for action. For example, he responds as a listener to the other after the Sichuan earthquake. People who are faced with his actions and his work become listeners. Several become volunteers who sign up to help him gather names. When he goes out for dinner in Chengdu, before testifying at Tan Zuoren’s trial, the act of dining draws listeners, his Twitter followers, to gather with him. The Chengdu police see this small dinner as a threat and a provocation. They confront Ai and his guests and strongly suggest that they leave. Toward the end of the film, Ai’s newly built studio is ordered demolished by the Chinese government. This studio was offered to Ai before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when he worked on the Bird’s Nest Stadium and before he began his vociferous protests of the Chinese government’s approach to preparing for the spectacle. Upon learning of the planned demolition, Ai organises a party, inviting guests through Twitter to join him in

eating 10 000 river crabs⁹. Ai is placed under house arrest, but the party goes on without him. People come together, take photos, and make videos of the Shanghai River crab party to share online. Evan Osnos describes the event in the following way:

The fact that the party went on without him was, in its own way, a reflection of his footprint here. These were ordinary people. These were people with a lot at stake in their lives. And with none of the security and the fame that he has to protect him. And they knew that. These people were not naïve, you know, but these people were inspired by something he was doing” (Klayman, 2012, 1:20:55)

Ai’s listeners continue to speak in response to him even when he is silenced. In the last minutes of the film, we learn that Ai has been detained by the police without warning. He is missing for over 80 days. His followers react by protesting and by creating artwork of their own until he is released. Even after the Chinese government fines Ai \$US 2.5 million, people respond to him in the tens of thousands. They send him money, stopping by his compound to throw small bills into his front yard. The voiceover coverage during the film’s closing credits describes these acts of generosity in the following way:

His supporters keep showing up outside. It doesn’t matter how much the contribution is. It’s not really about the money. It’s a vote for Ai Weiwei. Their enthusiasm is a direct challenge to the government, where they find Ai’s message far more inspiring than official Communist propaganda. (Klayman, 2012, 1:29:40)

In their response to Ai, listeners are inspired to become speakers and creators. They are moved beyond their current consciousness, outside the official parameters of thought and

⁹ Ai chooses river crabs for the “demolition party” as a not-so-veiled dig at the government. In Mandarin, the word for river crab sounds the same as the government’s slogan, “Harmonious Society”.

knowledge offered by the state, to discover what is being proposed by the speaker, their teacher. They find their own voices, first in response to him, then in facing and awakening others.

And this, after all, is some of what Ai Weiwei intends as an artist. Ai as teacher, as speaker, wants to shock his audience and break into the closed circle of their conscious totality. Ai's first New York gallerist, Ethan Cohen, who is interviewed at the start of the film, claims that,

Weiwei wants to slap you in the face. He wants to shock you. So when you see Weiwei taking a Neolithic pot and ceremoniously dropping it in front of the camera, he's saying, "I love the culture but I want to break from that line. I want something new." (Klayman, 2012, 5:40)

There is an interesting aspect of intention revealed by Cohen's perspective of Ai. Levinas contends that speakers respond to make themselves available to the other and to open themselves to the other (Gibbs, 2000). And yet what of the teacher? What of his or her intentions? Are they as equally nebulous and unbounded as those of the listener? Or is the speaker not held by the same bonds of responsibility? These questions lead to a transition in perspective and in analysis, from Ai Weiwei as listener and inspiration, to Ai as a political actor and speaker.

Speaking

To understand Ai as a speaker, I first aim to locate him as someone situated outside the traditions of power of the state, in this case the Chinese government. I then seek to

understand how his actions function as the creation of new political subjectivities between himself and the world around him.

On the outside. To begin to understand Ai as a speaker, I have to hearken back to Rancière's understanding of the space politics requires. First, it is important to note that according to a Rancièrian model, a political actor does not have to form part of a group who share the same concerns or even establish his action within the traditional forums of politics. Rancière (2001) determines that each person generates his or her own subjectivities by making connections from outside the state and across the supplemental spaces between self and other, *demos* and state. This sense of space and the distinction between self and state is present throughout the documentary as both Ai and Klayman make use of the interplay between inside and outside. One of the visual leitmotifs Klayman employs is to film doors and doorways, as well as people passing in and out of these spaces. The opening scene of the movie establishes this contrast between inside and outside by presenting the viewer with a shot of an enclosed compound with a high wall, closed gates and inset closed doors. This is Ai's Beijing home and studio. The visual generates the viewer's first implicit understanding that Ai is separate, outside, and that his acts have to carry across the space between him and the state. After telling the story of how cats learn to open doors and pass through, Ai's first act in the movie is, at minute 2:25, to walk through the green door of his home's compound to a car waiting for him. At minute 58:04, Klayman films Ai's office, lit up in the night, from outside in the dark. The voiceover in the background features several people reading from Ai's aggregate list of earthquake victims. The screen fades to black and the next scene fades in. Once more, the focus is the outside of

a closed door. At 1:23:16, when Ai has been taken by the police and is missing, Klayman films his office door using time lapse. Daylight gathers and fades, pets walk by, but the door remains closed. In the final scenes, when Ai is returned home by the police, Klayman again directs our attention to the juxtaposition of inside/outside by filming Ai as he crosses the threshold into his home. Straddling the threshold, Ai pauses to talk to the media only briefly—apologising once for not being able to say more—before shutting the door on the cameras. This is the last live footage Klayman shows; it perhaps, also, the last she shot.

The theme of inside/outside and of space between self and state is iterated in Ai's work as an artist. Chen Danqing, a Beijing-based artist whose interviews are featured throughout the film, opens the commentary on Ai as an artist by noting that he is unfamiliar and foreign to Chinese art circles. Danqing explains, "You know, we all graduated from the Central Academy. Here we call it being an artist 'within the system.' But he's not. He's ... just himself" (Klayman, 2012, 2:52). This initial description of Ai by a fellow Chinese artist establishes that Ai is not an artist who obeys the rules. He is, using the ways of thinking about art from chapter 3, someone who is predominantly interested in art that does not conform, art for the political, art that interrupts. His perception of himself is as an outsider, as someone who is outside the endorsed hegemonic and governmental practices of the state. As such, he is able to perceive, also, the space which exists for the enactment of politics, for the creation of subjectivities. In some ways, this dimension of space between individual and state may have been highlighted when Ai studied in New York. It was at this time that he was able to watch the Iran-Contra hearings on television. This was a revelation because it illustrated not only that such a space could exist, but also that a government could be aware of it and publicly address it. Evan Osnos claims,

I think actually Ai Weiwei learnt more from watching the Iran-Contra hearings on television than he did from the Tiananmen Square demonstrations. He had never lived in a culture where a government would put its own self on television on trial.

That to him was revolutionary. (Klayman, 2012, 50:20)

Ai's awareness of the supplemental spaces between the state and the *demos* awoke in New York. It seems that in these moments of separation from China, of physical as well as conceptual distance between his American and Chinese worlds, Ai was able to first perceive the possibilities for alternate ways of living in and with the world.

Upon his return to China in the late 1980s, he found that the state was doing everything it could to foreclose the supplementary, giving people less and less room to develop connections. Ai noted, "After a decade in New York, I'm not so used to China's conditions at that time. There was absolutely no art activities. Yes, there were painters but there was no discussion, nobody cared what's in their mind." (Klayman, 2012, 51:51).

Evan Osnos elaborates,

After Tiananmen, the government clamped down on all kinds of expression, whether it was writers, or artists or filmmakers. And then in the early 90s you had people like Ai Weiwei and Feng Boyi who started to look around and realise things were happening. Things were going on. But they weren't going on in the official galleries. (Klayman, 2012, 52:20)

Ai began to understand that the supplemental spaces required to enact democracy, to raise his own subjectivities, and to create art existed *because he existed*. He saw that the space became important and meaningful only if he used it to act; in this case, his action was to "create a condition in which artists can communicate" (Klayman, 2012, 52:42). And so, in

1994, he created an underground, counterculture art book called the *Black Cover Book*, which was “a very free space” where artists could write or submit anything, including poetry and photographs. The three books, *Black*, *White*, and *Grey Cover Books*, were distributed secretly outside official, state-sanctioned galleries. These books became their own kind of spaces, thought of as a kind of “exhibition on paper” (Feng Boyi in Klayman, 2012, 53:46). The books eventually led to a more tangible space for the non-conformist work: in 2000, the artists put on a show called *Uncooperative Attitude* in Chinese languages and *FUCK OFF* in English. Ai began to more openly wrestle with the confines of what could and could not be heard and seen. His series of photographs, from 1995 to 2003, titled *Study of Perspective*, reveal that this was an artist who was willing to be openly defiant, satirical and anarchic. As Ho (2011) describes in *Time*, the series features:

the artist flipping the middle finger against different places across the globe—many of which are iconic landmarks of their respective countries. The gesture, captured utilizing a snapshot aesthetic, confronts its viewer with a universal and concise statement of political opposition. (para. 2)

These images reveal not just Ai’s disdainful attitude toward the state, but also interestingly, the *distance* between him and the state. Why call it a study of perspective if not to subtly highlight the space between what was official and what, to him, was real? In his largest and most complex show to date in Munich, Ai made use of the inside/outside interplay once more by displaying what was arguably the most evocative work, *Remembering*, on the outside of the gallery walls, where it was visible to a broader audience. Ai also acknowledges and names the space between himself and the state when he is asked to describe himself as an artist. He replies to the interviewer, “I consider myself more of a...

more of a chess player. My opponent makes a move, I make a move. Now I'm waiting for my opponent to make the next move" (Klayman, 2012, 6:50). His comments paint a remarkable picture of how he perceives the void that exists between himself, as an artist and member of the *demos*, and the state. Ai does not see himself as isolated, nor does he contemplate the distance as unbridgeable. Instead, by referring to a chess board, he names the void, as Rancière would, a space for action.

It is curious that someone so distant from the prevailing ideology was brought inside the mechanisms of the state by the Chinese government to design their centrepiece for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Maybe the government's decision was an attempt to tame Ai? Or to show the rest of the world that the recalcitrant artist was now working with (and within) the state—an example of co-optation? Maybe Ai was seduced by the inherent promise and hope of the Communist Party's slogan of "One World One Dream" (Zhang, 2008)? Or, more superficially, by the promise of further wealth and fame? The latter seems least reasonable since he had had many previous opportunities to conform, sell a great deal of art, and grow wealthy in China. Interestingly, this work of architecture stands as one of Ai's few (if only) examples of work that conforms to the dominant hegemony in China. Is it a coincidence that it is, in fact, architecture that manifests as an example of conformity? Or, as I argued earlier in chapter 3, is architecture inherently conformist? While it is a fool's errand to speculate on why Ai first became involved with the project, it is reasonably clear that he became unhappy and disillusioned with his work on the Bird's Nest (Zhang, 2008; Klayman, 2012). In the film, Ai refers to the structure as a shameless symbol of the Communist party propaganda machine. The interplay between inside and outside continues for much of Ai's artistic career. While the Bird's Nest is a clear example of working within

the state, the inside and outsideness of spaces continues to emerge as a theme. For example, his decision to show his work at the Tate Modern in a show sponsored by Unilever could be perceived by some as working firmly within the state. And yet, as I suggested in chapter 3, art for the political does sometimes makes use of the structures of the state in order to reach a broader audience and bring more attention to an issue. In Ai's case, working within the hegemonic apparatus of a Western country does not directly undermine his own struggles with the Chinese government, though some might see the move as disingenuous for someone who questions established systems of power. This is a complicated question, especially if one considers that Ai also exploits Twitter and blogs to reach his followers. There is no straightforward resolution to whether an artist should make use of tools that emerge from within the dominant power, but if I return to Rancière's example of Jeanne Deroin as a political actor, the woman who signed up as a candidate in an election despite the laws prohibiting females from running, it becomes more clear that in connecting from the *demos*, an actor must sometimes make use of the extant infrastructure in order to perturb it.

Creating subjectivities. Ai speaks. He writes. He films. He creates. In almost every scene of the movie, the viewer is faced with one man's acts toward democracy as he persistently moves through and reaches out across spaces. Ai is a force toward change, a dynamic individual who is in equal measure listener and speaker, and who understands the power of an individual act. Ai notes, "Freedom is a pretty strange thing. Once you've experienced it, it remains in your heart, and no one can take it away. Then, as an individual, you can be more powerful than a whole country." (Klayman, 2012, 51:33). This idea of

freedom as a corollary of personal action, something not given but won through experience, is aligned with Rancière's ideas about freedom and emancipation. Biesta (2010) writes:

Rancière characterizes emancipation as “escaping from a minority.” Although this could be read as a formal definition of emancipation since it refers to ending a situation in which one is a minor, the use of the word “escape” already signals a different dynamic from the one outlined previously by associating emancipation with an activity of the one who “achieves” emancipation rather than presenting it as something that is done *to* somebody. Rancière indeed writes that “nobody escapes from the social minority save by their own efforts”. Emancipation is, however, not simply about the move from a minority position to a majority position. It is not a shift in membership from a minority group to a majority group. (p. 39)

If as Rancière contends, emancipation is reliant on an escape, on one's own efforts, then freedom is only possible as an experience gained through action. To be free, even for a moment, is not to join the majority, but to perturb the visible arrangement of *what is* with the proposal for *what can be*.

These moments of freedom leave a powerful vestige in Ai's heart and propel him to continue to act even in the face of danger. It is these same encounters with freedom which inform how, in creating his own personal responses to the state, his subjectivities, he invites others to participate and become actors, too. Ai is constantly working with others, whether it is to include volunteers when gathering names or to incorporate assistants to help him build and erect his massive displays or even to solicit retweets on Twitter . These others, “volunteers” and “assistants” as they are referred to in the film, reveal that they are not simply Ai's followers, but consider themselves as individual actors who just happen to be

moving toward some of the same goals. Huang Kankan, one of the earthquake volunteers, is asked by the interviewer whether the authorities knew that she was “one of Ai Weiwei’s people.” She replies,

We said we were all volunteers, there on our own. The way I see it, we weren’t there as anybody’s “people.” We were just doing the same work. That’s what I’ve always thought. It’s like we were doing the same work as Ai Weiwei. (Klayman, 2012, 13:35)

The workers were not a homogenous “part of those who have no part,” (Rancière, 2001, p. 5). That their actions overlapped or aligned with Ai’s does not render them followers bounded within the confines of the same minority. Instead, they were one of a “count of the unaccounted-for” (Rancière, 2001, p. 6), struggling to make their own connections across the supplementary, whose actions and aims come into confluence with Ai’s for a moment in time.

The temporality of Ai’s actions and for how subjectivities emerge is also a point of consideration. As I mentioned in chapter 1, Rancière sees politics as a “rupture,” a moment in the present and for the future. Throughout the film, Klayman presents evidence of Ai working in the present with the hope of challenging the status quo. His act of smashing a Neolithic pot is a statement about time in itself: it is a moment in the present, which draws upon the past and the histories embodied by the pot as a physical object, and which demands a reconsideration of the past and present toward something new and different in the future. The act itself is of the present, even if the action of smashing is captured on film or in photographs for future contemplation. Ai is drawing attention to the power of a single act, transpiring in a single moment, by choosing to question history in a gesture that is itself

vulnerable to the passage of time. This play between past, present and future, and a sense of what is called and recalled into the present, is also apparent when Ai invites people, on the two-year anniversary, to record themselves speaking the names of the 5212 earthquake victims from the lists he had initially posted on his blog on the one year anniversary of that disaster. The act of speaking in the present recalls the event from history and demands that the horror which animated the political action in the days following the earthquake continue to haunt the present. This is not simply an act of memorial, because the critique of the government and the call to action still stand. The reanimation of Ai's list of names serves to trouble the norms of the state as the reappearance of a subjectivity and qualifies as a new act of *subjectification*. Klayman continues with Ai's example by reaching out to others to join and extend her art. At the end of the film, she closes with a request for the viewer: "Follow @AWWNeverSorry on Twitter, and keep Ai Weiwei's story a part of the online conversation." She seeks to prolong the interaction with the audience, asking us to continue to be listeners and to become speakers in our own right. This same message is iterated on the film's website under the heading "Take Action."

It is significant that Klayman and Ai ask people to act, not just to reflect and think. Acting means speaking and doing. It is not based on thinking alone, because thinking cannot reach out across a space and cannot break apart a totality. The Chinese government comments on this distinction when they hold a press conference about political dissident, Liu Xioabo, explaining their decision to sentence him to 11 years in prison. A representative for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims, "Liu Xioabo was not convicted for his thoughts. Liu Xioabo, by doing things like publishing his essays online, incited the overthrow of China's political power and system" (Klayman, 2012, 35:40). This statement

reveals that the dominant group, the Chinese government in this case, recognise that while thoughts have power, it is really action which galvanises change through disruption. And Ai was clearly committed to interruption. He determined, “if [the people] don’t push, there’s nothing happening” (Klayman, 2012, 7:42) and that “if you don’t act the danger becomes stronger” (Klayman, 2012, 15:50). Ai has turned his thoughts and ideas into language and action by creating works of art, but also, like Liu Xioabo, by exploiting technologies such as Twitter and blogs. He recognises that “blogs and the internet are great inventions for our time because they give regular people an opportunity to change public opinion” (Klayman, 2012, 14:33). He employs technology to amplify his acts of speaking and, when the state attempts to muzzle him, it is these technologies they target. After posting the names of earthquake victims, for example, the government shut down his blog and installed surveillance cameras at his home. These actions did nothing to truncate Ai’s efforts; he simply turned to Twitter to bypass the Chinese firewall. For Ai, every Tweet becomes an act of politics, a reaching out across space, a new *subjectification*. His art, his Tweets and his blogs comprise a part of the language Ai utilises to get across the supplementary. He argues, “It’s about communicating. It’s about how we use the language which can be part of our history or part of other histories. And how we transform it into today’s language” (Klayman, 2012, 26:08). This is why Ai speaks and creates, writes and films. It is his enaction of politics for democracy. It is his contribution to the common world.

The Common World

In my chapter 1 critique of the current state of politics and society, I argued that we are at the precipice of the perilous loss of the common world. I discussed how the three factors contributing to worldlessness included loss of listening as a responsibility to the other, a focus on private over public needs, and the lack of ability to perceive the supplementary between self and other, state and *demos*. Ai's work moves us back toward a common world because, as I documented in the immediately preceding sections on listening and speaking, he does listen ethically and does distinguish the space between self and state. In this last section, I highlight how his art and his actions have focussed on the restoration of the second factor: public over private needs and desires.

Ai is concerned with creating spaces. To once again make use of Arendt's metaphor, he strives to provide the table around which we might sit in order to engage in politics. Or maybe, continuing to work with Rancière's idea of the *supplémentaire*, I might say that he is concerned with highlighting and negotiating the spaces between, with "self-affirmation as a joint-sharer in a common world" (Rancière, 1995, p. 49). But Ai is not interested in the places and spaces within the state: there are a great many scenes in the movie featuring impressive government buildings and official squares, and yet there is no perceived room for discourse other than the sanctioned government rhetoric. The spaces have collapsed or been forcibly cleaved; they have been so deeply shadowed by lies and propaganda that they are no longer visible to the average citizen. So Ai shines a light, he tears a rent in the perceived confluence between the state and *demos*. This is apparent as he tries to set up a safe space for non-traditional discourse about art by creating the *Black*, *Grey*, and *White Cover Books* and by putting on the show *Uncooperative Attitude / FUCK*

OFF. The books are not distributed through stores or shops, but in tense interactions outside those official spaces. The exhibit does not take place within state-sponsored galleries, but in a converted Shanghai warehouse. He also uses art to draw attention to the hypocrisy of some official spaces. In his work against the Beijing Olympics, Ai points to the destruction of whole villages and hutongs. To elaborate in the documentary, Klayman juxtaposes footage of machinery working outside the Bird's Nest and of the opening ceremony's fireworks with scenes of angry, displaced people and homes being razed to the ground. Ai shows his contempt for the government's unsympathetic handling of Olympic sites by being equally cold and calculating in his treatment of traditional, Chinese urns. These urns, such as the Neoclassical vase used in *Han Dynasty Urn with Coca Cola Logo*, are considered to be priceless artefacts from Chinese history, and Ai paints over them using logos and vivid colours. Phil Tinari, a Museum Director in Beijing, comments,

people tend to dwell on things like destroying a Han dynasty urn, painting over Neolithic vases, but those things are actually sort of meant to highlight the fact that that same kind of destruction happens every day without anyone really thinking about it. (Klayman, 2012, 29:40)

Ai does not only build spaces for the common world, he also draws attention to when those spaces have been corrupted or co-opted. This tug of war between Ai and the state persists throughout the film. Ai works on building the Bird's Nest, while the government smashes homes. Ai reacts in anger against the government by smashing urns and openly critiquing their ruthlessness, and they respond by demolishing his newly-constructed studio. So the common world is built, and so it is destroyed. Ai perseveres with this work, because of his "persistent belief that things will be possible" (Klayman, 2012, 1:18:40), despite the

hardship, despite the loss of future architectural work, and despite the demolition of his studio.

It is clear at several points in the film that Ai has made sacrifices in order to pursue political action for democracy. As a child, he and his family were sent to a labour camp because of his father's stand against the Communist Party. While this was Ai's father's sacrifice rather than his own, it did set a moral precedent. Ai may well have learnt the value of working toward a larger public good, even if the work results in personal hardship. As an adult, the film traces how Ai placed his personal and financial wellbeing in danger by generating highly visible critiques of the government. For example, when Ai was in New York during the 1980s, there were other Chinese artists and students who made money, started a career. Yet, Ai was more concerned with listening and learning. His roommate, Hsieh Tehching, observes that Ai used his camera like a diary, filming protests. Ai's ostensible concern was not to create artwork that might show or sell; his goal at that time was to listen and learn. When asked why he filmed so many protests in New York, Ai replies, "It's not that I am particularly interested in protests. For me, it's a way to experience democracy" (Klayman, 2012, 47:23). This focus on learning and on experiencing meant that Ai had very little when he returned to China. Hsieh remarks, "Sure he worked hard during those 12 years in New York, but he didn't have anything to show for it" (Klayman, 2012, 50:33). Even in the 1990s, when Ai was in New York and when he first returned to China, there were artists who conformed to Chinese government ideology, who were within the state, showing at official spaces like galleries, who made a lot of money. Yet Ai chose to publish an underground book with very limited distributorship and very little potential for monetary gain. Phil Tinari determines that Ai's

artistic career didn't really take off until 2003-2004, when you had him being invited to work on the Bird's Nest. And then, very quickly, it was kind of established as he was someone who needed to pop up in at least every China show that someone would do. (Klayman, 2012, 6:10)

And yet, despite this brief turn towards more conformist, within-the-state kind of creation, Ai almost immediately returns to working on projects in China that bring him less wealth. For example, He Yunchang, a fellow contemporary artist, notes that Ai's work on the Sichuan earthquake names took three years of "blood and sweat" and turned into a list of names on his wall and a recording on his blog. He claims that, "Ai Weiwei's doing the work that the government should be doing ... [while they were] busy divvying up their money" (Klayman, 2012, 57:19). There are also several examples of him giving away work, distributing documentaries like "Lao Ma Ti Hua" freely on his blog.

In the film, there are also instances of Ai exhausting personal resources in an effort towards change, even if the outcome is doubtful. When he files a complaint at the Chengdu police station, for example, and follows up repeatedly, he states that he is filing the lawsuit not because he wants an apology, but because he wants the government to learn that it cannot abuse and bully its citizens without consequence. In a scene outside the police station when Ai recognises the officer who assaulted him, there ensues a physical altercation between groups. Ai returns to the car and immediately asks the team to Tweet about it. He engages with the system, not because he believes in it or because he believes in a fair outcome, but because he wants to illustrate that the system is broken and corrupt. He wants the state, the government, to "show their true face" (Klayman, 2012, 1:08:26): violent, brutal, and callous in the face of resistance. Evan Osnos notes that, "transparency is

to Ai Weiwei what liberty was to another generation. You know, that is his battleground, and the question of what deserves to be public and what belongs to the public, that's what he is fighting about" (Klayman, 2012, 11:42). This focus on public concerns rather than on the narrow limits of personal achievement, recognition, and wealth is perhaps a result of Ai's sense of responsibility to the other and to what may exist beyond his own lifetime. Ai observes, "It takes time, of course it takes generations but of course it takes a voice to speak out. I don't want my next generation to have to fight the same thing as I did" (Klayman, 2012, 1:18:10). He once again demonstrates that his actions and his art are about the process of acting in the moment, rather than an immediate outcome.

Some critics might observe that, despite his more altruistic gestures, Ai is neither poor nor powerless. After all, he was named "Most Powerful Artist" by *Art Magazine*. And yet, it stands to reason that his wealth and his power exist in spite of his actions, rather than as a direct result of them. If he chose financial gain, chose to prioritise his private needs over more public concerns, he could have become a much richer man. Hung Huang, a cultural blogger and magazine publisher, articulates this clearly:

He was already famous, he could have gotten a lot of real estate projects for him to design. He could have sold his art at a huge price because this was when Chinese art was escalating in terms of pricing and value, and everything. To actually go ahead and create that much anti-government noise on the internet? He has thrown away these opportunities. (Klayman, 2012, 11:54)

And so, it is less a question of whether Ai is now famous or wealthy. It is more an issue of whether he put his private needs ahead of others, following the path of least resistance to achieve wealth and fame, or whether he made difficult decisions that consistently

imperilled his health, financial standing, safety, and family. It is clear from his choices, both as an artist and as a citizen, that Ai was almost always acting in the interest of the public, concerned less with his wellbeing as with the state of his common world with others.

Aside from the questions about Ai's wealth and his movement from within the state to without, a further potential critique can be made of Ai as a listener and as a speaker. Levinasian listening calls for humility:

One comes not into the world but into question. By way of reference to this, or in 'memory' of this, the ego (*moi*) which is already declaring and affirming itself (*s'affirme*)—or making itself firm (*s'affermit*)—itself in being, still remains ambiguous or enigmatic enough to recognise itself as hateful, to use Pascal's term, in this very manifestation of its emphatic identity of its ipseity, in the 'saying I'. The superb priority of $A = A$, the principle of intelligibility and meaning, this sovereignty, or freedom within the human ego, is also, as it were, the moment when humility occurs. This questions the affirmation and strengthening of being found in the famous and facilely rhetorical quest for the meaning of life, which suggests that the absolute ego, already endowed with meaning by its vital, psychic and social forces, or its transcendental sovereignty, then returned to its *mauvaise* conscience. (Levinas, 1989, p. 81)

And speaking from the *demos* requires space between self and state:

The principal function of politics is the configuration of its proper space. It is to disclose the world of its subjects and its operations. The essence of politics is the

manifestation of dissensus, as the presence of two worlds in one. (Rancière, 2001, Thesis 8 section)

Yet, there are moments in the film when it seems that Ai is neither humble nor speaking from across a space. For example, Evan Osnos (Klayman, 2012, 43:45) comments that one of the common critiques of Ai is that he holds reductionist views of a complex China. The title of the film itself, “Never Sorry” might be read as a lack of humility. And, as noted earlier, there are several examples of Ai exploiting what might be perceived as within-the-state mechanisms, such as making use of corporate funding from for his shows (e.g., Unilever at the Tate Modern) and marketing techniques (e.g., when Ai discusses himself as a brand). Does this mean that Ai and his art conform? That he cannot, in all his fame and power, retain the humility and outsideness required of an ethical political actor? I would argue, despite the critique, that Ai more consistently demonstrates a disposition congruent with Levinasian listening and Rancièrian acting than not. While he is an imperfect listener and, as an actor, exploits the tools available to him, I would posit that he still acts toward the establishment of a common world built on the other, and in respect of the spaces needed to invite wisdom and to enact politics. Put another way, I find it reassuring that Ai is flawed. Levinasian listening asks us to pursue, without aim, an unattainable beyond. It is a suggestion that is rewarding and fatiguing. Levinas does not offer us certainty and perfection as the penultimate goal of listening; as such, it would be folly to think that the practice of Levinasian listening could be performed without falter. It is Ai’s grappling with the tensions between his position as renegade and “Most Powerful Artist” that give him his credibility as an example of how ethical and political action may be accomplished through art.

Daring Tenuousness: Ai's Art as Other

It's a vexing time for those of us who believe in the right of artists, intellectuals and ordinary, affronted citizens to push boundaries and take risks and so, at times, to change the way we see the world. There's nothing to be done but to go on restating the importance of this kind of courage, and to try to make sure that these oppressed individuals—Ai Weiwei, the members of Pussy Riot, Hamza Kashgari—are seen for what they are: men and women standing on the front line of liberty. How to do this? Sign the petitions against their treatment, join the protests. Speak up. Every little bit counts. (Rushdie, 2013, para. 17)

It is difficult—nearly impossible—to separate discussions of Ai Weiwei's art from considerations of Ai Weiwei as a political actor and dissident. This is because in most of his work, there is an element of interaction which involves the artist directly. This is evident in his art and his exhibitions, as well as in the writing about his art, which almost always features a profile on the artist himself as some sort of change-maker (Conde, 2012; Hancox, 2012). Nonetheless, it is important when discussing the ethicopolitical framework and art's role as an other to foreground the voice that the work itself carries. To do this, I will examine two of Ai's exhibitions: *Sunflower Seeds*, and *Fairytale and Template*. Specifically, I look at how these works embody certain tensions and how they invite a sense of tenuousness of the viewer.

Sunflower Seeds was exhibited at the Tate Modern Gallery in London, England from October 12, 2010 to May 02, 2011. The work comprised 100 million hand-painted porcelain sunflower seeds, a short film documentary of how these seeds were made, and a

set of interactive booths where visitors could record a response or question that would be shared with Ai in a virtual “One-to One With the Artist” (Hancox, 2012). As a visitor to the exhibit, Hancox is arguably a listener who was compelled to respond to the work by writing her article. In her analysis, she raises several points of contact and questioning—breaks in totality, as it were—that occur between the audience and the work. These interruptions, I argue, are based on the many tensions embedded in *Sunflower Seeds*, tensions which invite a dizzying exposure to the infinity between what we think and what the other, the work, reveals, and a *supplement* between what is and what may be. Hancox (2012) observes one such tension:

The film offers a platform of sorts that gives voice to the Chinese artisans, yet it is the western audience who are able to gaze upon the workers and the town in which they are located, watch the production processes on the film, touch the fruits of another’s labour and voice their own opinions and questions via the interactive booths. As with mirrored glass, who is able to view the Other depends upon the side that one is standing: the framing of these seeds as art in a prestigious museum accentuates the audience’s position as a consumer of difference – the deciphering and interpretation of the installation is an exercise that the western visitors are given an opportunity to indulge in (no less by Ai, the Tate and their own socio-economic circumstances). *Sunflower Seeds*, however, is not a direct political protest against this disparity, but a prompt to uncover the audience’s (and the project’s) own positionality and complicity in the production and reproduction of these power relations, and their continued narration in history. (p. 283)

This idea of being complicit in the consumer-producer model, and of being made aware of one's complicity, draws into focus some of the tension between what we think, our totalities of false knowledge, and what the other teaches us. This tension provokes a double-seeing (or in a Levinasian context, a double-listening) of sorts: my initial response, a superficial seeing or hearing based on my existing totality; then, crucially, my second response, what I see/hear as a result of being made aware of my own seeing/hearing tendencies. This is an echo of what Maclear (1999) terms "parallax vision" (a concept I discuss in more detail in chapter 8). The audience is moved to ask: What am I seeing? What is my role in this distance between others? What is my construct of certainty, totality, which leads me to see this other as exotic? The tension between initial and secondary response is also provoked by the seeming contradictions read in *Sunflower Seeds*. As Hancox (2012) points out, and as I have noted above, there is also a tension in the disconnect between the platform and the message. On one hand, the platform, the Tate gallery and the sponsorship of the show by Unilever, suggest a sort of Western imperialism¹⁰, while, on the other hand, the work itself aims to highlight some of the challenges of conventional thinking about Eastern and Western cultural and political dichotomies. Yet, Hancox (2012) is clear that this seeming hypocrisy is one of the integral means the work employs to challenge the status quo, stating that "the cultural and economic capital gained through such power structures provides the platform to create an exhibition that may reach a wide public and, potentially, change geopolitical imaginations" (p. 288). So it is that *Sunflower Seeds* creates a tension, exploits the space that that tension creates,

¹⁰ Hancox (2012) describes how both the Tate and Unilever have been critiqued for historical and ongoing association with, and exploitation of, "uneven global economies" (Harvie, 2009).

and pulls the audience onto uncertain terrain, just far enough away from absolute knowing to break totality and compel a sense of responsibility.

A further tension *Sunflower Seeds* provokes is the pull between immediacy and distance. Hancox (2012) notes that her immediate reaction upon entering Turbine Hall, the space where the exhibition was housed at the Tate, was to try and gaze upon the entirety of the “vast, ashen, pebble-beach” (p. 281), the field of grey seeds; she sought to move in close, to touch (and maybe, by touching, to claim) the experience of the other. But Hancox is immediately challenged by a great crowd blocking her field of vision, each of whom is queued to hold the seeds. Thus, her first encounter with the work is already a jarring interruption, forced on her by the others who are gathered around her. Her gaze is disrupted and she is forced to think about why touching and seeing is so important to herself and to all the people gathered at the site. Reflecting upon this initial reaction to touch and to claim, Hancox (2012) recognises that this in itself is a tension that the artist has intentionally created: the desire for a “proximate encounter” (p. 282) with the seeds but a sense of impossibly reconcilable distance portrayed by the accompanying documentary showing the artisans painting the seeds in Jingdezhen, a small village known as the ‘porcelain capital’ of China. The juxtaposition of the seed display and the video also creates a tension between the stereotype of industrialised “Made in China” products that are produced in bulk and are of lesser quality, and the reality of the painstaking labour that went into the creation of these delicate seeds, which have been carefully hand-painted over the course of two and a half years by 1600 artisans.

Fairytale and *Template* were two features of the *Documenta 12*, held from June 16, 2007 to September 23, 2007 in Kassel, Germany. For *Fairytale*, Ai brought 1001 Chinese

visitors in groups of 200 to Kassel over the course of the three-month show. He designed all of their travel gear, including cameras, clothing, and luggage, and housed them in a retrofitted textile mill, but the visitors were free to wear whatever they pleased and sleep wherever they chose. Each of the 1001 visitors many of whom had never before left their villages, freely explored the town of Kassel during the exhibition, with the intent that they could freely engage on an individual basis with the community at the show and in Kassel. For *Template*, Ai salvaged wooden Ming and Qing Dynasty window frames and doors from demolished houses and created a sculpture in an outdoor field at the exhibition. Interestingly, after a storm on June 20, 2007, the sculpture collapsed; Ai's response was to let the newly ruined sculpture stand. Conde (2012) notes that Ai declared the sculpture "even more beautiful than before" and that "it comes from ruins and now it's really a ruin" (p. 7).

As with *Sunflower Seeds*, *Fairytale* is rife with symmetries, contradictions and tensions. In *Fairytale*, the most obvious and immediate (a)symmetry emerges in the form of the (compelled, yet authentic) interaction between self and other. This is as true for the viewers as it is for the Chinese visitors. The work's core premise is exposure: the stripping away of certainty (i.e., a physical dislocation away from life as it is known by the visitors in China / the presence of visitors forcing an upheaval of stereotypes Germans may have held about life in China) in a one-on-one exchange. The work, comprised of people moving through an actual life experience—that of travelling to a new country / that of meeting someone from another country—blends art and Levinasian listening in a new and unusual way by foregrounding the interaction and by rendering a break in totality the central aim of the project. As Coggins (2007) states, "to encounter the project was also to contend with

the indelible factualness of it—the piece was not a proposition, these people were *here*” (p. 120). That Coggins uses the word ‘factualness’ about a piece called *Fairytale* is suggestive of a further tension: even though the Chinese visitors were “actually” there, they were not really there on their own terms. Because the visit was staged and managed, there was a counterbalance between the visitors’ freedom to choose their experiences and the boundary of the frame of the work (and even the geographical boundary of the town of Kassel). Embedded within the work is also the contrast between the experiences of the individual and their sense of belonging to a group. By supplying each visitor with a camera and tape recorder, and by encouraging them to document their personal experiences, Ai invited each visitor to become a singular listener and speaker. Being a member of *Fairytale*’s “‘social sculpture’ ... was certainly a personal adventure for many of its participants” (Conde, 2012, p. 10). This echoes the symmetry required for the whole of the ethicopolitical framework I have proposed: that I am unfalteringly tethered to an original responsibility for the other who I will never fully know, that I am a singular actor, but am simultaneously obliged to work toward a common world. The Chinese visitors who formed *Fairytale* also had the unique experience of being both within and without. They were the art, but they also interacted with one another and the members of the community, thereby becoming viewers as well as participants. Finally, *Fairytale* creates a tension—an important tension in the Levinasian context—between what is visible and what is not. Because the public could not enter the living area (Coggins, 2007), there was a physical reminder that not everything was on display. A section of the exhibit was closed off, unavailable, and always beyond the gaze of the viewer. This is a significant aspect of *Fairytale*: the complete alterity of the other is not sacrificed; it is maintained in the piece just as it is always maintained in life.

Reality and yet fairytale. Individuals and yet a group. Within the work and yet on the outside, too. Creating yet also experiencing. Visible and yet invisible. Seeing and hearing and yet not knowing, not capturing. These were the major thematic tensions *Fairytale* presented, creating opportunities for interaction and supplementary space for action.

Some of the same motifs were also present in *Template*. For example, the work raised similar questions about the (in)visible. The doors and window frames were on display in an outdoor setting, ruins twice over, where people attending the exhibition could freely walk and gaze. Comprised of only windows and doors of demolished homes, the work invokes what is not there, what is invisible, in two ways: first, by inviting the viewer to reflect on the absence of the rest of the home, on the very act of its demolition, on the unheard voices of the people its destruction displaced; second, because the work was built using relics of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the piece calls up a sense of historical incertitude, incompleteness. There is also a tension of being inside and outside. As noted, the piece was built on a field, where it was destroyed in a storm. In a literal sense, the work was outside. Metaphorically, however, the windows and doors suggest a movement, being in flux between outside and inside. The work further provided a counterpoint to *Fairytale*: that which was demolished in contrast with that which was repurposed (the mill in which the visitors were housed). In addition, *Template* created an opportunity for the Chinese visitors from *Fairytale* to interact with art made up of Chinese artefacts, moving them once again into the role of viewer, and encouraging, once again, a double sense of seeing and hearing, a parallel sort of witnessing.

That Ai is a change-maker, dissident, and political activist is undeniable. I have made the argument that in his work he is both a listener and speaker toward a common

world. As I have demonstrated above, his art also stands in its own right as a potential other, awakening us to our innate sense of responsibility for the other and to the potential of our selves as singular actors, change-makers by virtue of being changed. In viewing the vast field of seeds or collapsed doors and window frames, I am called to see/hear double by the tensions, symmetries, and contradictions embedded in the work. I am called into question and the neat assumptions that protect my complacency are violated. I am compelled, inclined before the other as listener, to speak, to affirm, to apologise. I am dared into tenuousness, solicited to singular action toward a common world, because, as Rushdie (2013) notes, “every little bit counts”.

CHAPTER 8

A PEDAGOGY FOR BEGINNING

“... no accounting, disciplinary or otherwise, can ever be finished or complete. There is always more. There is always possibility. And this is where the space opens for the pursuit of freedom” (Greene, 1994, p. 128).

To open this final chapter, I reassert my initial claim that this work does not seek to establish a methodology or model. I follow Rancière’s example (Biesta, 2010) and try to abstain from a position of mastery in my writings and recommendations. So it is that even as I propose some ideas for consideration of how pedagogy might align with the ethicopolitical framework I espouse, I recognise that these suggestions cannot be considered or received as solutions to the “problem of teaching”; instead, they are avenues which, in congruence with the ethics and politics I advance, may work to undo the flawed perceptions of certainty that teaching can sometimes advance. This is a pedagogy that rejects conformity in favour of ambiguity, shaky hope, and action through creativity. It is a pedagogy rooted in beginning, and beginning, and beginning again.

I begin with a specific focus on art, offering the idea that an arts curriculum can be adapted to include discussions of art as interruption. I suggest that art pedagogy should be based on inquiry about the art, its context, and personal response, rather than on the study of traditional aesthetic elements and principles. To do this, I use Levinas (1989), Todd (2003), and Simon (2005). I then discuss a philosophy of pedagogy that is based on art as interruption toward democracy, using Biesta’s (2011) ideas about the “ignorant citizen”,

Greene's (1994) process of "making strange" and Maclear's (1999) concept of "parallax vision".

The Pursuit of Freedom

For pedagogy to shift from the confines of a knowledge discourse to the possibilities of an interpretive or interruptive inquiry, one needs look no further than Levinas (1989) who again provides the value of a particular orientation: Levinas' conception of listening suggests that as an artist, one must be a listener and a learner before one can find the freedom to speak or respond. We find our freedom through our orientation to the other, through how we listen, and through how we choose to respond. In accordance with this Levinasian philosophy, pedagogy is founded on the desire for wisdom, rather than the thirst for absolute knowledge. Todd (2003) integrates Levinasian listening with education by examining how a certain type of listening obligates us to be responsible for the other, and suggests that this type of listening should form the foundation for a pedagogy rooted in social justice. Todd (2003) notes that "underlying each [student's] responses is a certain quality of attentiveness in the listening of those stories; and it is this quality that seems to me to be important for considering ethical relations across difference, and ultimately for relations of justice" (p. 405). Here, Todd is alluding to the particular orientation toward the other that Levinasian listening requires. It is a willingness to receive without the pretence of ownership. Todd (2003) elaborates this nuance: "someone who might deeply identify with another who may be suffering ... may not be listening and attending fully to the difference that marks the other's experience as unique and distinct from one's own" (p. 405). As teachers offer students multiple voices through exposure to

art, they must also encourage a certain orientation which refrains from presenting the other as an anecdote of history or a fact to be memorised and grasped. Teachers can do this by disclosing the limits of their own wisdom and by presenting the other as a tenuous voice, whose experience can affect us, but whom we may never fully claim. Teachers can, as Todd (2003) does, ask questions which draw attention away from knowledge and rely on the shaky ground of listening for wisdom: “What is it that we listen to when we listen? How does listening contribute to establishing a specifically ethical attentiveness to difference? And, how might listening open up the possibility for a just response?” (p. 405). These questions help us to pursue freedom by exposing the tenuous scaffolds supporting what we construe as factual curriculum; they oblige us to turn our search for freedom away from a freedom *from* commitments, toward a freedom *to* respond.

This perspective on freedom is also apparent in Simon’s (2005) work on memory and history. Simon (2005) contends, “the practice of a transactive public memory evokes a persistent sense—*not of belonging but of being in relation to*, of being claimed in relation to the experiences of others” (p. 89). The lack of belonging to a group means that one is not constrained by the boundaries of a particular group or set of rules. Freedom is found through the relation with others and through the investigation of their experiences in conjunction with our own. In this way, the transactional sphere of memory provides an interesting parallel means for interacting with art. It is an approach which may render the learner more willing to question the role, purpose, and function of art from the past; also, more importantly, because the student is not forced into belonging or conformity, he or she may be more prepared to create art as an interruption within his or her own sociopolitical context.

If one accepts the premise that a significant amount of conventional art education is framed using tools and examples from the past¹¹, usually referencing a traditional canon of works and principles, then one must learn to interact with this form of art without losing the ability to look forward into the possibilities for art as interruption. Simon (2005) assists with this reorientation from study of the past to becoming open to the possibilities for the future. His approach to collective public memory is not based on a stagnant knowledge set, but is instead concerned with creating a series of transactions that shape who we are and how we think by enacting a claim upon us. Simon (2005) states that

Memory may become *transactional*, enacting a claim on us, providing accounts of the past that may wound or haunt – that may interrupt one’s self-sufficiency by claiming an attentiveness to an otherness that cannot be reduced to a version of our own stories. Such an interruption underscores the potential radical pedagogical authority of memory, in that it may make apparent the insufficiency of the present, its (and our own) incompleteness, the inadequacy of our experience, the requirement that we revise not only our own stories but the very presumptions that regulate their coherence and intelligibility. On such terms, a transactive memory has the potential to expand that ensemble of people who count for us, who we encounter, not merely as strangers (perhaps deserving pity and compassion, but in the end having little or nothing to do with us), but as ‘teachers,’ people who in telling their stories change our own. (p. 88-89)

¹¹ A great many art courses use art history and the elements of design as foundational component of their curricula. For example, in Ontario, the elementary Arts Curriculum document states that “the arts are an important means of recording and expressing cultural history and identity”; the guide also makes repeated reference to the expectation that students should be “learning about the sociocultural and historical context of the arts” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 14).

I have previously made the claim that art from the past that has been repurposed into art as education cannot be interruptive. Nonetheless, I maintain that because the curriculum for art almost always draws upon art history and principles from the past as its substantive content, educators must consider how to work with these tools in a manner that does not become rigid or certain. While it offers but a pale shadow of the power and primacy of interruptive art, the study of art which emerges from the past through Simon's lens of transactional space helps re-orient the learner from a state of passivity and indulgence to a state of personal responsibility and self-reflection. Central to this pedagogy is the decision to work with art so that it appears not superficially as a manifestation of elements and principles that have been collated into a disciplinary method, but so that it troubles the learner's perceptions of what art can achieve and how art's purpose can diverge from traditionally-held beliefs.

“Making Strange”: The Promise of Art and the Possibility for Democracy

Now that the groundwork has been laid for the pursuit of freedom, the question becomes what do we, as a society, hope to move toward in our gestures for freedom? In reply, I draw a connection between the ethicopolitical framework and the potential for art as a move toward democracy. The pedagogy supporting this art for the political is situated against the concept of the pre-formed citizen (Biesta, 2011), toward the idea of art rendering the world which we share “strange” (Greene, 1994), as we become “witnesses travelling through a dense fog, learning to overcome our poor vision” (Maclear, 1999, p. 76).

The concept of character education, of educating for democracy, is incompatible with an ethicopolitical framework which is based on the other and which advances wisdom over knowledge. This is because character education suggests that the ideal characteristics for a democratic citizen can be inculcated through explicit instruction of values; it proposes that what is best for democracy is *what is*, or *what has been*, rather than *what could be*. Biesta (2011) notes that “ideas about the role of education in the promotion of good citizenship are based on a cluster of knowledge claims” (p. 142), which are founded on what a society thinks they collectively know and believe to be correct in the present. These knowledge claims include “knowledge about what a good citizen is; knowledge about what a good citizen needs to learn; and knowledge about how individuals can learn to become good citizens” (Biesta, 2011, p. 142). The danger, as Biesta and others (Mouffe, 2005; Todd & Säfström, 2008) have observed, is that any type of democracy formed on the basis of knowledge claims pins down its citizens into one mode of doing, thinking, and speaking. It automatically asserts the primacy of one ontology—of, as Simon (2005) suggests “belonging”. It bars from the conversation the possibility of the other; and if the other is introduced, it is not with the orientation of humility and responsibility, but as a relief to propound the value of the state’s own single best system. A multiplicity of perspectives, what Mouffe (2005) would refer to as multipolarity, does not form a substantive element of learning.

Instead of this model, Biesta (2011) advocates for “the ignorant citizen,” who is “not a pre-defined identity that can simply be taught and learned, but emerges again and again in new ways from engagement with the experiment of democratic politics” (p. 152). Biesta (2011) recommends an education of exposure, possibility, and tenuousness. This

pedagogy makes explicit its own fallibility and models the humility required to really learn from the other. It is an approach that is symbolic of the word “cleavage,” for even as it introduces students to the state, cleaves them unto the system they ostensibly belong, so does it also require them to cleave from that state in recognising their own personhood. Todd and Säfström (2008) suggest that the most important aspect of education for democracy is

instead of telling students that the work of democracy is to create one ‘we’ through consensus building, the point rather is to come to an acknowledgement of their implication in creating—and sustaining—exclusionary forms of belonging in holding certain points of view collectively. (In *Education for a Democratic Promise* section, para. 3)

Students are not expected to enter into the state’s dominant discourse, accepting it as the one true path to democracy. While the current system must certainly be studied, it is only to provide possible points of connection to students who are seeking to understand their own relationship with the state. The *demos*, however, must also be introduced. The idea of the outsider and the concept of duality between I/other is fundamental to an education that seeks to illumine the delicate pathways to democracy that are available to each individual as a singular political actor. Teachers ought not lay down for students a heavy and seemingly insurmountable burden of conformity by suggesting that there is only one version of democracy, accessed through the extant and reified structures of the state. They must instead foster hope for a democracy that can be made through a single voice that speaks from the *demos* to interrupt what is with what could, or even should, be.

As I have previously argued, art is a powerful conduit to open students to a sense of the possible, because it is both accessible and affectively evocative. While it is difficult to always model the process of democracy within a school setting, with its inherent contexts of power, art provides a window to respect for the other and hope for the future. It lifts the terrible burden of conformity and obedience from the shoulders of students, and gives them license to approach, with respect and humility, the vast possibilities of the other. Greene (1973; 1994) describes this process, and the utility of art for opening a classroom up to the world; more particularly, she provides for a way of “making strange” (Greene, 1994, p. 122) the world which students and teachers share. Greene’s (1994) chapter in *The Dialectic of Freedom*, titled “Multiplicities, Pluralities, and a Common World” brings together the idea of multiplicity for which I advocated above using Biesta (2011), Todd and Säfström (2008), and Mouffe (2005), with the potential for the common world. In it, Greene suggests that in listening, attending to voices from an other, we open ourselves to possibilities for freedom. Using Merleau-Ponty, she notes that “the freedom to be sought is inextricably meshed with responsibility and obligation” (Greene, 1994, p. 100). She also determines that art is one of the most powerful tools for pursuing that freedom through listening and through exploring multiplicities. Educative art (though Greene does not categorize it as such), the art which emerges from the distant or not-so-distant past, is examined for its ability to create spaces. These are the spaces between state and *demos*, between self and other, between what we are conscious of and the infinity of exteriority. Greene (1994) describes how

art objects – not only literary texts, but music, painting, dance... have the capacity, when authentically attended to, to enable persons to hear and to see what they

would not ordinarily hear and see, to offer visions of consonance and dissonance that are unfamiliar and indeed abnormal, to disclose the incomplete profiles of the world. (p. 129)

I noted above that ‘taught art’—that is, art introduced into the classroom for the purposes of education—is rarely interruptive and mostly educative. And yet, Greene’s approach to art pedagogy mimics the orientation to the other that is needed to enact an ethical politics and helps students begin to see art as a potential tool for change.

Greene (1973; 1994) also discusses how the arts may be integrated into the classroom as a way to construct something new. She begins by noting that artists have offered viewers a way of deconstructing life experiences by first disassembling, and often times discarding, the traditional “communal symbolism that made the visual arts a unifying force in earlier times” (Greene, 1973, p. 12). These artists have begun “tampering with inherited conventions, questioning the very idea of art” in order to force people to “examine [their] own preconceptions and expectations” (Greene, 1973, p. 12). It is a purposeful shift away from artistic convention, and it mirrors the shift away from absolute knowledge that is required to begin with the break from the *bonne conscience*. Artists, writers, musicians, filmmakers and dancers are rejecting the historical parameters of connoisseurship, and are offering people a chance, through art, of exploring the openness, tenuousness, and possibility of meaning. It is for this reason that the arts provide a unique opportunity to teachers, not only as a means of re-seeing the world for themselves, but also to introduce the complexity of meaning into the curriculum. Greene (1973) describes how art can bring diverse modes of analysis into the classroom:

Those who read or look or listen attentively can create new orders within themselves. Doing so, they are likely to discover new meanings, unsuspected angles of vision; they may discover original perceptions of what it is like to be alive, “themes of relevance” against which students can pose worthwhile questions. (p. 16)

The element of questioning and of receptiveness is what is central to a pedagogy of art that allows for ethics and politics based on the other. And while much of contemporary art study does pose questions, I would argue that the content, the aim, and the purpose of the questions need to be aligned with the larger goal of opening ourselves to the other, even when that other is a voice from the past represented in a work of art.

Maclear (1999; 2003) picks up these threads about temporality and questioning, and supplies a way to think about how to open art pedagogy to the possibilities of the future while addressing aspects of its historicity, and for working through the possibilities for better questioning. In chapter 3, I offered my perspective that historical art, even art which was once interruptive, cannot interrupt the present because of the gap in time and place between dominant hegemonies. And yet, here I offer another potential way of thinking about art from the past—very much in line with ‘making strange’—which suggests that if as viewers, we can become more responsive, then there exists the possibility for art from the past to reach into the present and to help us galvanise our own interruptions (both of how we understand the past and in how we plan the future). Maclear (1999) writes about the importance of memorial and witnessing through historical examples of art. She argues that art is “suspicious of closure ... [with] the power to respect claims of otherness and difference” (Maclear, 1999, p. 76) and that “art has ventured to find ways of cutting

through the soft parts untried in the pursuit of hard-edged knowledge” (Maclear, 1999, p. 81). Maclear (1999) also determines that art can

provide a powerful reminder of lapses in justice; it can remind us that justice, like memory, can only be partially and imperfectly conceived. Where words tire and slip into routine, when memory-work becomes a closed turf, expressive culture may open up new sites of possibility by providing opportunities to see and hear what has become familiar differently; it may provoke memories that could not be generated elsewhere. (p. 86)

The only point at which art as witnessing transcends memorial is if we as viewers act or speak or create new meanings for our contemporary contexts based on the calls from the other. So it is that art from that past, even as it conforms to contemporary hegemonies, may still be used to generate new interruptions (not of the past; our new understandings cannot retroactively shift the tenor of past events). This approach to art can interrupt our current understanding of the past in order to generate new possibilities for the future. If, as listeners in the Levinasian sense, we can attend to how we connect to the past through art, then we can generate interruptions to our present and future by broadening our consciousness and by smashing apart the rigidity (and fiction) of historical truths.

To achieve these ends, I return to the possibilities of questioning. Maclear (1999; 2003) furnishes the concept of “parallax vision,” which works in complement to Greene’s ideas about how to make the world strange by informing how questions can be oriented towards openness. When Maclear (2003) discusses the complexity embedded within the narrative and visual structures of the film *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, she observes that these elements challenge the viewer to work past the constraints of evidentiary remembrance to

the broad possibilities beyond. The problem of representing *beyond what is* parallels Levinas' discussion of how to say the unsayable, or to recognise the space between what is said and the saying, the "question of trying to *say* that which cannot be *said*" (Critchley, 1999, p. 231). Maclear seeks to enliven this space by shining onto it a relentless beam of inquiry. Her suggestion is a "parallax approach" which "tends to the impossible task of representation and to the persistent struggle to express something about the subject, however incomplete and inadequate that 'something' might be" (Maclear, 2003, p. 234). A parallax vision asks the viewer of a film, or of any representation of the other, to become aware of the space between and to be courageous enough to ask questions that may go unanswered. It invites a sense of duality, of the necessary tension that is present between what is said and what is sayable, by asking us to see, or to ask questions, in two levels: first, as a "corrective [which encourages] us to ask what counts as evidence, how testimony is socially enframed"; second, as a "contemplative" measure which yields "passages" or spaces through which we "may revisit our own perceptual and epistemic assumptions" (Maclear, 1999, p. 86). Thus, art from the past, even art which ostensibly conforms to the mores of the present, does not have to be presented—should not be presented—as a known known.

To further the point that parallax vision and questioning can help students find their way as ethical and political actors, I assert that Maclear's (1999) two levels of questions, the corrective and the contemplative, can be overlaid onto Levinasian ethics and Ranciorean conceptions of politics. The corrective mode of questioning accentuates the space between self and state by asking listeners, students, to consider how the world that is being proposed is "enframed." Corrective questions reveal how the perceptible world is

partitioned and prepare students to make the connections required for Ranciorean politics. In a Levinasian sense, corrective questions address the students' own boundaries of thought: what is it that guards the perimeter of their horizon of consciousness? How is it that we have confined ourselves away from the immensity of the other? On the other hand, contemplative questions are forays into the space that cleaves self and state. These types of questions become preliminary attempts at *subjectification* as a student reaches out from personal experience and makes connections. They are the first ventures into speaking or acting from the *demos*. Contemplative questions, as a Levinasian listener, are apology and affirmation. They form part of a response that casts aside presumptions of knowledge and mastery in favour of humility and tenuousness.

Maclear (1999) furnishes a way of thinking about seeing and questioning that is compatible with this ethicopolitical framework. To fully consider parallax vision through questioning as a possibility for animating pedagogy, however, I feel it is necessary to reconsider the names she offers for each of the two levels. First, if I trace the Latin etymology of the word¹², I argue her use of 'corrective' implies that these types of questions bring into order, make straight, or amend. Perhaps a better term for this level might be 'constitutive' from *con* (together) and *statuere* (set up); the etymology here suggests that upon asking these questions, one might work with the other, together, to begin to see what has been set up and where space exists. The constitutive question defines the spaces needed to challenge the partition of the sensible; they prepare the patrol of consciousness for greater duties by altering where the perceived division exists between what has been built and what may come. Second, I propose to alter Maclear's terminology

¹² All word origins were referenced using the Oxford English Dictionary (2014).

from 'contemplative' to 'intercessive'. 'Contemplative' intimates that one has surveyed, observed, or contemplated. It hints at thought without movement or action, rumination rather than seeking. The Latin etymology of 'intercessive', alternately, means to go between, from *inter* and *cedere*. Intercessive questions suggest a movement or a reaching out to touch, even briefly, as a point of connection. They are questions that are also response.

How do constitutive and intercessive questions help us begin to build a pedagogy? First, by demonstrating that the past can be talked about, taught, and investigated without foreclosing the complexity and complications of its dynamic unknowability. Greene (1973) and Maclear (1999; 2003) give us a way of acknowledging that we do not know all there is to know, that there is no real knowing at all. If the goal is the pursuit of freedom, as expressed by the work of listening and responding, toward democracy, as delineated by an approach or orientation of openness rather than a narrow definition of what it means to be a good citizen, then the pedagogy must be based on a similar sense of openness to what is unknown and what will remain unknowable. The process of how we teach this is, of course, more complex than any prescriptive set of steps or measures will allow, but it can be begun by learning to ask questions of ourselves. In opening students to the unknown and the unknowable, educators must themselves begin by questioning their responses to the other and to the world around them. A teacher's primary and most compelling duty becomes to know how they know; it is to be willing to ask themselves about the boundaries and limits they have imposed on their own thinking. What do I know? How have I come to know it? What are the limits of my openness, as suggested by the biases and beliefs I carry in my heart? How am I closed? How have I been taught to wall myself from possibility through

surety? What do I consider unquestionable certainties of fact? If a teacher is unwilling to delve headfirst into the broad expanse of fragility and wisdom, then he or she will be a poor model for students who must begin their own journey into questioning and disruption. To be a good teacher, to enliven good pedagogy, is to be vulnerable with students to the continual beyond the horizon; it is to see teaching as much as an examination of self and self's response to otherness, as it is to experience that otherness with the goals of freedom and democracy. Once students begin to witness their teacher wrestling with these questions, then, as listeners, they will be inspired to proceed with their own kind of fragile destruction and reconstruction of the patrol of consciousness. To pose these questions requires humility and courage. To ask them without the pretence of certainty or mastery inspires others to do the same. This is the way forward. This is the way to begin.

We are bounded by our skins. These bodies we inhabit present our first limit, the first press of horizon against other. The world of inside and outside. If, as Arendt (Arendt & Kohn, 2006) suggests in "The Crisis in Education", we present to children "the world as it is" (p. 189) as a collection of facts, we serve only to reinforce the boundaries of their world: what is within and what is without. But always, above all, what is: We tell how it is, we teach how it was; sometimes, we discuss what may be. If we adhere to a curriculum of knowledge, especially knowledge as it is presented and defined by the dominant hegemony, we obscure the possibilities for diversity and change. We rob children of their ability to see themselves in relation to a thing that is not fixed and indestructible, but mutable and incomplete. We thief from these children their chance to make change or to add to a world that is always growing and evolving. Instead we tell of how the world is, and assume that students will themselves learn to accommodate the space furnished for them within the

world. But the world must be presented in all its fragility because the beauty of what is offered in its openness, its incompleteness, is too powerful to ignore. As learners, we begin open: our innate natality holds up open to the possibilities of the other, because it is from this other and through our experiences alongside the other that we begin to see ourselves in relation to the world. Teachers ought not foreclose that receptivity by conflating wisdom with knowledge. To teach within the comfort and surety of knowledge is to possess a shield and inhabit a prison, it is to preserve the illusion of totality that keeps us complacent. Knowledge is the obstacle which keeps us bounded, forever tense that our illusions of certainty may be shattered. Knowledge keeps us alone. We must instead choose to live exposed to the other, not simply vulnerable, but hopeful that we will forever be pushed beyond what we are today. We must shed knowledge for wisdom in the hope of beginning, breaking, and then growing toward infinity. We do not chase goals. We strive to perpetually be in the unease of motion between listener and speaker, self and other. This is the essential tension, the responsibility that gifts us freedom. While the classroom might not generate interruptive art directly, it can certainly incorporate a pedagogy of openness, of listening, and of creative response. Educators can, and should, bring students closer to understanding their natality, awaken in them the potential to effectuate change, and expose to them the value of building a common world.

Concluding Thoughts

This study comes at a time when worldlessness, to this writer, seems pressingly close. Modern politics often present a suffocatingly distressing reality based on individualism and self-interest that cannot be distinguished from selfishness. Survivors of

catastrophes from previous generations look around with despair asking, “What happened to the world my generation built?” (Smith, 2014 June 4). This study is not an attempt to solve those problems or to present a model based on a series of pretended truths. For how can a researcher who denies the reality of absolutes present a model reliant on laws rather than a framework based on observations? It is instead a work which suggests an orientation shift, a step away from the immediate demands of the selfish present toward the possibilities of a benevolent future.

What is this effort if not an assailing on what is and a gesture to what may be? The ethicopolitical framework, the possibilities and promises of art, and the pedagogy for a future generation of listeners and creators each build toward a common world. This vision of the common world is grounded in the other, in my responsibility for the other, in my respect for the other’s complete alterity, and in my desire for freedom and wisdom based on our interaction. It is toward this future, toward a common world that recognizes the prospect of change and greater democracy, that this study aspires. Is it complete? No. And never will it be. It is the bones of a future world we flesh with hope.

REFERENCES

- Abbs, P. (2003). *Against the flow: Education, the arts and postmodern culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Adams, J. (2002). Art in social movements: Shantytown women's protest in Pinochet's Chile. *Sociological Forum*, 17(1), 21-56.
- “Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry.” (2012). Retrieved from <http://aiweiweineversorry.com/>
- Anderson, I. (2007). *This is our music: Free jazz, the sixties, and American culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Angelou, M. (1993, January 20). *On the pulse of morning*. Speech delivered at the Presidential Inauguration Ceremony, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~oliver/soc220/Lectures220/Angelou.htm>
- Arendt, H. (1978). *The life of the mind*. New York: Harcourt.
- Arendt, H. (1994). *Essays in understanding*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.
- Arendt, H. (1998). *The human condition*. Chicago: Chicago University.
- Arendt, H., & Kohn, J. (2006). The crisis in education. In *Between past and future: Eight exercises in political thought* (173-196). New York: Penguin Classics.
- Arsenjuk, L. (2007). On Jacques Rancière. *Eurozine*. Retrieved from <http://www.eurozine.com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/pdf/2007-03-01-arsenjuk-en.pdf>
- Averill, J. R., & Sundararajan, L. (2004). Hope as rhetoric: Cultural narratives of wishing and coping. In J. Elliott (Ed.), *Interdisciplinary perspectives on hope* (133-165). Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science.

- Baumann, S. (2007). *Hollywood highbrow: From entertainment to art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bennett, J. (2005). *Empathic vision: Affect, trauma, and contemporary art*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Biesta, G. (2010). A new logic of emancipation: The methodology of Jacques Rancière. *Educational Theory*, 60(1), 39-59.
- Biesta, G. (2011). The ignorant citizen: Mouffe, Rancière, and the subject of democratic education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 30(2), 141-153.
- Boano, C., & Kelling, E. (2013). Towards an architecture of dissensus: Participatory urbanism in South-East Asia. *Footprint*, 7(2), 41-62.
- Bolter, J. D., & Joyce, M. (1987, November). Hypertext and creative writing. In *Proceedings of the ACM conference on Hypertext*. Paper presented at ACM Conference on Hypertext, Chapel Hill, North Carolina (pp. 41-50). New York: Association for Computing Machinery.
- Broudehoux, A. (2010). Images of power: Architectures of the integrated spectacle at the Beijing Olympics. *Journal of Architectural Education*, 63(2), 52-62.
- Butler, J. (2002). Explanation and exoneration, or what we can hear. *Grey Room*, 7, 56-67.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. London: Verso.
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation News (2012, May 8). War artist destroys works as protest against Tories. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/war-artist-destroys-works-as-protest-against-tories-1.1205062>
- Casas, A. (2010). Antagonism and subjectification in the poem of resistance. *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 6(2), 71-81.

- Chanan, M. (1994). *Musica practica: The social practice of Western music from Gregorian chant to postmodernism*. New York: Verso.
- Chanter, T. (2001). *Time, death, and the feminine: Levinas with Heidegger*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Chazelle, C. M. (1990). Pictures, books, and the illiterate: Pope Gregory I's letters to Serenus of Marseilles. *Word & Image*, 6(2), 138-153.
- Chiba, S. (1995). Hannah Arendt on love and the political: Love, friendship, and citizenship. *The Review of Politics*, 57(3), 505-535.
- Colla, E. (2012). The poetry of revolt. In J. Sowers & C. Toensing (Eds.), *The journey to Tahrir: Revolution, protest, and social change in Egypt* (pp. 47-52). New York: Verso Books.
- Coggins, D. (2007). Ai Weiwei's humane conceptualism. *Art in America*, 95(8), 118-125.
- Conde, I. (2012). *Art and power: Contemporary figurations* (Working Paper No. 121/2012). Lisbon, PT: Centro de Investigação e Estudos Sociologia – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (CIES-IUL). Retrieved from http://www.cies.iscte.pt/destaques/documents/CIES-WP121_Conde.pdf
- Copland, A. (1980). *Music and imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Corner, J. (1996). *The art of record: A critical introduction to documentary*. New York: Palgrave.
- Corner, J. (2005). Television, documentary and the new category of the aesthetic. In A. Rosenthal & J. Corner (Eds.) *New challenges for documentary* (pp. 48-58). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

- Crignon, P. (2004). Figuration: Emmanuel Levinas and the image. *Yale French Studies* 104, 100-125.
- Critchley, S. (1999). The original traumatism: Levinas and psychoanalysis. In R. Kearney & M. Dolley (Eds.), *Questioning ethics: Contemporary debates in philosophy* (pp. 230). New York: Routledge.
- Danvers, J. (2006). The knowing body: Art as an integrative system of knowledge. In T. Hardy (Ed.), *Art education in a postmodern world* (pp. 77-90). Portland: Intellect Books.
- Deleuze, G. (2000). *Proust and signs: The complete text*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deutsche, R. (2010). Three: Krzysztof Wodiczko. In *Hiroshima After Iraq: Three Studies in Art and War* (pp. 55-70). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Derrida, J., & Caputo, J. D. (1997). *Deconstruction in a nutshell: A conversation with Jacques Derrida* (J.D. Caputo, Ed.). New York: Fordham University Press.
- Di Paolantonio, M. (2011). Interrupting commemoration: Thinking with art, thinking through the strictures of Argentina's Espacio para la memoria. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 32(5), 745-760.
- Documenta 12. (2007). Documenta Kassel 16/06 - 23/09, 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.documenta12.de/leitmotive.html?&L=1>
- Druliolle, V. (2009). Silhouettes of the disappeared: Memory, justice and human rights in post-authoritarian Argentina. *Human Rights and Human Welfare*, 9, 77-89.
- Engle, K. J. (2007). Putting mourning to work: Making sense of 9/11. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24(1), 61-88.

- Eppert, C. (2000). Relearning questions: Responding to the ethical address of the past and present in others. In R.I. Simon, S. Rosenberg, & C. Eppert (Eds.), *Between hope and despair: Pedagogy and the representation of historical trauma* (pp. 213-230). New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Eppert, C. (2008). Emmanuel Levinas, literary engagement, and literature education. In D. Egéa-Kuehne (Ed.), *Levinas and education: At the intersection of faith and reason* (pp. 67-84). New York: Routledge.
- Eyerman, R., & Jamison, A. (1998). *Music and social movements: Mobilizing traditions in the twentieth century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finnegan, C. A. (2001). Documentary as art in "US Camera." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 31(2), 37-68.
- Flierl, B., & Marcuse, P. (2009). Urban policy and architecture for people, not for power. *City*, 13(2/3), 264-277.
- Freeman, M. (1999). Culture, narrative, and the poetic construction of selfhood. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 12(2), 99-116.
- Friends of Free Expression. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.friendsoffreeexpression.com/pages/return-policy>
- Frosh, S. (2002). The other. *American Imago*, 59(4), 389-407.
- Galenson, D. W., & Weinberg, B. A. (2001). Creating modern art: The changing careers of painters in France from impressionism to cubism. *American Economic Review*, 91(4), 1063-1071.
- Galikowski, M. B. (1990). *Art and politics in China, 1949-1986* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (301516183)

- Galloway, M. (Presenter), Novak, P. (Guest), & Escuyos, C. (Guest). (2014, September, 29). Homelessness transitioning. In L. Brown (Producer), *Metro Morning*. Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
- George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gibbs, R. (2000). Why listen? In *Why ethics?: Signs of responsibilities* (pp. 29-46). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (2005). Translating the future. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 27(3), 213-218.
- Goodavage, A. (2013, February 21). Alison Klayman on filming Ai Weiwei. *Independent Lens Blog*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/blog/alison-klayman-on-filming-ai-weiwei>
- Greene, M. (1973). *Teacher as stranger: Educational philosophy for the modern age*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Greene, M. (1994). *The dialectic of freedom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hagberg, G. L. (1995). *Art as language: Wittgenstein, meaning, and aesthetic theory*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.
- Hale, D. J. (Ed.). (2006). *The novel: An anthology of criticism and theory 1900-2000*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Hamilton, M. A. (1996). Art speech. *Vanderbilt Law Review*, 49, 71-122.
- Hancox, S. (2012). Art, activism and the geopolitical imagination: Ai Weiwei's 'Sunflower Seeds'. *Journal of Media Practice*, 12(3), 279-290.

- Harvie, J. (2009). Agency and complicity in "a special civic room": London's Tate Modern Turbine Hall. In D. J. Hopkins, S. Orr & K. Solga (Eds), *Performance and the city* (pp. 204-221), Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harwood, J. (2014). The corporation as concept. *Art In America*, 102(4), 78-85.
- Heaney, S. (1995). *The redress of poetry*. New York: The Noonday Press.
- Hinchman, L. P., & Hinchman, S. K. (1984). In Heidegger's shadow: Hannah Arendt's phenomenological humanism. *The Review of Politics*, 46(2), 183-211.
- Ho, A. (2011, April 21). Study of Ai Weiwei. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/3776468/study-of-ai-weiwei/>
- Hofmeyr, B. (2007). "Isn't art an activity that gives things a face?" Levinas on the power of art. *Image and Narrative*, 18. Retrieved from http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/thinking_pictures/hofmeyr.htm
- Howell-Ardila, D. (1998). Berlin's search for a "democratic" architecture: Post-World War II and post-unification. *German Politics & Society*, 16(3), 62-85.
- Iyer, L. (2001). The sphinx's gaze: Art, friendship, and the philosophical in Blanchot and Levinas. *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 39(2), 189-206.
- James, S. (2009). Infinitely demanding anarchism: An interview with Simon Critchley. *Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy*, 2, 3-21.
- Jasper, J. M. (1997). *The art of moral protest: Culture, biography, and creativity in social movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kanellopoulos, P. (2007). Musical improvisation as action: An Arendtian perspective. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 6(3), 97-127.

- Keane, M. (2013). *Creative industries in China: Art, design and media*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Kearney, R. (1995). *Poetics of modernity: Toward a hermeneutic imagination*. New York: Humanity Books.
- Kearney, R. (1999). The crisis of the image: Levinas's ethical response. In G. B. Madison & M. Fairbairn (Eds.), *The ethics of postmodernity: Current trends in continental thought* (pp. 12-23), Evanston, IL: Northwestern University.
- Kenaan, H. (2011). Facing images: After Levinas. *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 16(1), 143-159.
- Klayman, A. (Producer & Director). (2012). *Ai Weiwei: Never sorry* [Motion picture]. US: Sundance Selects.
- Kleiner, F. (2014). *Gardner's art through the ages: The Western perspective, Vol. 1*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2002). Colour as a semiotic mode: Notes for a grammar of colour. *Visual Communication*, 1(3), 343-368.
- Lash, S. (1996). Postmodern ethics: The missing ground. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 13(2), 91-104.
- Lee, M., & Faber, R. J. (2007). Effects of product placement in on-line games on brand memory: A perspective of the limited-capacity model of attention. *Journal of Advertising*, 36(4), 75-90.
- Lehu, J. (2007). *Branded entertainment: Product placement & brand strategy in the entertainment business*. London: Kogan Page.
- Levinas, E. (1989). *The Levinas reader*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

- Levinas, E. (2011). *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Llewellyn, J. (2008). *The hypocritical imagination: Between Kant and Levinas*. New York: Routledge.
- Mack, M. (2012). *How literature changes the way we think*. New York: Continuum International.
- Maclear, K. (1999). *Beclouded visions: Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the art of witness*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Maclear, K. (2003). The limits of vision: Hiroshima Mon Amour and the subversion of representation. In A. Douglass & T. A. Vogler (Eds.), *Witness and memory: The discourse of trauma* (pp. 233-248). New York: Routledge.
- Mao, Z. (1942, May). *Talks at the Yenan forum on literature and art*. Retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm
- Martinez, T. A. (1997). Popular culture as oppositional culture: Rap as resistance. *Sociological Perspectives*, 40(2), 265-286.
- May, T. (2008a). Jacques Rancière: Literature and equality. *Philosophy Compass*, 3(1), 83-92.
- May, T. (2008b). *The political thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating equality*. University Park, PA: Penn State Press.
- McDonald, J., & Stephenson, A. M. (2010). *The resilience of hope*. New York: Editions Rodopi.

- McGeer, V. (2004). The art of good hope. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 592(1), 100-127.
- Mittler, B. (2003). Cultural Revolution model works and the politics of modernization in China: An analysis of "Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy". *The World of Music*, 45(2), 53-81.
- Mouffe, C. (2005). Cosmopolitics or multipolarity? *Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory*, 9(1), 15-26.
- Muse Film and Television. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.musefilm.org/>
- Natusch, B., & Hawkins, B. (2014). Mapping Nichols' modes in documentary film: *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* and *Helvetica*. *The IAFOR Journal of Media, Communication and Film*, 1(2), 103-127.
- Obrist, H. U. (2011). *Ai Weiwei speaks: With Hans Ulrich Obrist*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2009). The Ontario curriculum grades 1-8: The arts. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.pdf>
- O'Sullivan, S. (2010). From aesthetics to the abstract machine: Deleuze, Guattari and contemporary art practice. In S. Zepke & S. O'Sullivan (Eds.), *Deleuze and contemporary art* (pp. 189-207). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Owens, P. A. (2004). Xenophilia, gender, and sentimental humanitarianism. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 29(3), 285-304.
- Oxford English Dictionary. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>

- Pahwa, S., & Winegar, J. (2012). Culture, state and revolution. *Middle East Report*.
Retrieved from <http://ns2.merip.org/mer/mer263/culture-state-revolution>
- Peretz, E. (2010). Introduction: Reality and its shadow. *The Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, 56(1), 1-5.
- Phillips, P. C. (2003). Creating democracy: A dialogue with Krzysztof Wodiczko. *Art Journal*, 62(4), 33-47.
- Quattrone, P. (2006). The possibility of the testimony: A case for case study research. *Organization*, 13(1), 143-157.
- Rancière, J. (1991). *The ignorant schoolmaster*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Rancière, J. (1992). Politics, identification, and subjectivization. *October*, 61, 58-64.
- Rancière, J. (1995). *On the shores of politics*. London: Verso.
- Rancière, J. (1999). *Dis-agreement: Politics and philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rancière, J. (2001). Ten theses on politics. *Theory and Event*, 5(3). Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/21247046/Ten-Theses-on-Politics-by-Ranciere>
- Rancière, J. (2003). *The philosopher and his poor*. Durham, NC: Duke University.
- Rancière, J. (2005). From politics to aesthetics? *Paragraph*, 25(1), 13-25.
- Rancière, J. (2006). Democracy, republic, representation. *Constellations*, 13(3), 297-307.
- Rancière, J. (2007). The emancipated spectator. *Artforum International*, 45(7), 270-281
- Rancière, J. (2013). *The politics of aesthetics*. New York: Bloomsbury Academics.
- Rancière, J., Carnevale, F., & Kelsey, J. (2007). Art of the possible: An interview with Jacques Rancière. *Artforum International*, 45(7). Retrieved from <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jacques-ranciere/articles/art-of-the-possible/>

- Reiss, A. (2008). Beyond 'books for the illiterate'. *British Art Journal*, 9(1), 4-14.
- Robbins, J. (1999). *Altered reading: Levinas and literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Robbins, J. (2005). Aesthetic totality and ethical infinity: Levinas on art. In C. E. Katz (Ed.), *Emmanuel Levinas: Critical assessments of leading philosophers* (pp. 356-368). New York: Routledge.
- Roberts, J. (1998). *The art of interruption: Realism, photography, and the everyday*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Ruez, D. (2012). "Partitioning the sensible" at Park 51: Rancière, Islamophobia, and common politics. *Antipode*, 45(5), 1128-1147.
- Rumbo, J. D. (2002). Consumer resistance in a world of advertising clutter: The case of Adbusters. *Psychology & Marketing*, 19(2), 127-148.
- Rushdie, S. (2013, April 27). Wither moral courage? *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/opinion/sunday/whither-moral-courage.html?_r=0
- Sanbec (2004). Retrieved January 10, 2015 from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fermat%27s_spiral.png
- Scott, A. J. (2005). *On Hollywood: The place, the industry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sedgwick, K. (2009, September 12). Ausencias: People "Disappeared" by the Argentinean Dictatorship. Matador Network. Retrieved from <http://matadornetwork.com/change/ausencias-haunting-images-of-people-disappeared-by-the-argentinean-dictatorship/>

- Segrave, K. (2004). *Product placement in Hollywood films: A history*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Sewell Jr., W. H. (1992). A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), 1-29.
- Scheuermann, M. (1985). *Social protest in the eighteenth-century English novel*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.
- Simon, R. I. (1992). *Teaching against the grain: Texts for a pedagogy of possibility*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Simon, R. I. (2005). *The touch of the past: Remembrance, learning and ethics*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Simon, R. (2006). Museums, civic life, and the educative force of remembrance. *Journal of Museum Education*, 31(2), 113-121.
- Sketch. (2014). About Sketch. Retrieved from: <http://www.sketch.ca>
- Smelser, N. J. (2004). September 11, 2001, as cultural trauma. In A. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. Smelser and P. Sztompka (Eds.), *Cultural trauma and collective identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Smith, H. L. (2014, June 4). A eulogy to the NHS: What happened to the world my generation built? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jun/04/coalition-attacks-nhs-return-britain-age-workhouse>
- Sontag, S. (1977). On photography. *The New York Review of Books*, 23(22), 174-178.
- Staehler, T. (2010). Images and shadows: Levinas and the ambiguity of the aesthetic. *Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics*, 2, 123-143.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

“The Art is Red.” (2014, December 20). *The Economist*, 65-66.

Todd, S. (2003). Listening as attending to the “echo of the otherwise”: On suffering, justice, and education. In S. Fletcher (Ed.), *Philosophy of education yearbook 2002* (pp. 405-412). Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society.

Todd, S., & Säfström, C.A. (2008). Democracy, education and conflict: Rethinking respect and the place of the ethical. *Journal of Educational Controversy*, 3(1). Retrieved from <http://www.wce.wvu.edu/Resources/CEP/eJournal/v003n001/a012.shtml>

Ullestad, N. (1987). Rock and rebellion: Subversive effects of Live Aid and ‘Sun City’. *Popular Music*, 6(01), 67-76.

University of Wyoming. (2009, March 04). UW Art Museum reopens with The Disappeared/ Los Desaparecidos. Retrieved from <http://www.uwyo.edu/uw/news/2009/03/uw-art-museum-reopens-with-the-disappeared-%20los-desaparecidos.html>

van Alphen, E. (2005). *Art in mind: How contemporary images shape thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weisstein, E.W. (n.d.). Fermat’s spiral. *MathWorld: A WolframWeb Resource*. Retrieved from <http://mathworld.wolfram.com/FermatsSpiral.html>

Weiwei, A. (2011). *Ai Weiwei’s blog: Writings, interviews and digital rants 2006-2009*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Wijnberg, N. M., & Gemser, G. (2000). Adding value to innovation: Impressionism and the transformation of the selection system in visual arts. *Organization Science*, 11(3), 323-329.

- Wright, S. (2008). Behind police lines: Art visible and invisible. *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts, and Methods*, 2(1). Retrieved from <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n1/wright.html>
- Young, A. (2013, March 3). *The writing on the wall: Graffiti, poetry, and protest in Egypt* [Review of the book *The writing on the wall: Graffiti, poetry, and protest in Egypt*]. Los Angeles Book Review. Retrieved from http://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/the-writing-on-the-wall-graffiti-poetry-and-protest-in-egypt#_msocom_1
- Zhang, F. (2008, August 4). China's Olympic crossroads: Bird's Nest designer Ai Weiwei on Beijing's 'pretend smile'. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://beijing2008.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/04/chinas-olympic-crossroads-birds-nest-designer-ai-weiwei-on-beijings-pretend-smile/?_r=0
- Zhang, Y. (2014). Governing art districts: State control and cultural production in contemporary China. *The China Quarterly*, 219, 827-848.
- Zhao, X., & Belk, R. W. (2008). Politicizing consumer culture: Advertising's appropriation of political ideology in China's social transition. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(2), 231-244.