

BEAUTIFUL & AMBIGUOUS NEWS: AN AESTHETIC APPROACH
TO THE LIMITS OF DISCURSIVE "TRUTH"

By

Michael Andrew Lithgow

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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BEAUTIFUL AND AMBIGUOUS NEWS: AN AESTHETIC
APPROACH TO THE DISCURSIVE
LIMITS OF "TRUTH"

submitted by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Abstract

'Speaking truth to power' remains a hallmark of quality journalism reflecting two important elements of news discourse: an unshaken belief in the indexical relationship between news-truth and the world; and a desire to limit the influence of domination when putting forward these descriptions. But a genealogical critique of knowledge vis-à-vis Michel Foucault suggests that "truth" and knowledge are discursive outcomes whose circulation depends on the extent to which they reflect conditions of power. This dissertation makes the claim that journalism is engaged in the production of discursive (rather than indexical) "truth", and that news techniques obscure the epistemic enigma inherent in the production of discursive meanings through aesthetic strategies; that is, through categories of experience that encompass the non-rational and affective dimensions of cultural communication.

Through a reinterpretation of Immanuel Kant's four moments of beauty in *The Critique of Judgment*, I propose a four-part framework for understanding the role of aesthetic experience in the production of discursive legitimacy. My study focuses on four examples of cultural production, the authors of which who engage aesthetic tactics to both challenge legitimacies of power and to assert alternatives within larger structures of public understanding. In each case (including a radical citizen's journalism project, a public art initiative, a sculpture/installation exhibited in a public art gallery and an experimental community), authors/creators asserted their own subjective integrities within competing structures of legitimacy (including hegemonic legitimacies) and identifiable through their expected audiences. Aesthetic experience was used tactically to challenge dominant structures of legitimacy – their legibilities, the credibility of conditions giving rise to their instigation, and their appropriateness – in ways that resisted outright condemnation as false or folly. These tactics suggest possibilities for new aesthetic practices within formal discourses of public knowledge such as journalism and possible techniques for culturally challenging conditions of power.

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I do not think that a society can exist without power relations, if by that one means the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others. The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible.

— Michel Foucault, *The ethics for the concern for self as a practice of freedom*



Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion.

— Fredereich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*

Introduction

Aesthetics is a surprisingly under-studied phenomenon in the field of communication scholarship. It describes, broadly stated, the non-rational and yet meaningful attributes of cultural phenomena – our first encounter in culture and experience before we make experience into meaning with systems of cognitive indexing, understanding and rationality. Early Greek philosophy associated aesthetic experience with a sensual way of knowing in contrast to knowledge of the mind (Beardsley 1966). Through the 18th and 19th centuries, a philosophy of aesthetics developed in Europe critically orientated toward rational consciousness and its excesses found in industrialization and capitalism (Eagleton 1990; Ferry 1993). Immanuel Kant, whose ideas of aesthetics (or rather, key aspects of them) will figure in the discussion to come, situated aesthetic experience as the fulcrum between laws of nature and the independence of reason. For Kant, the experience of beauty provided a moral compass for human experience: the means through which we can encounter, on the one hand, our necessary place within the universe, and on the other, our independence from it (Eagleton 1990; Hammermeister 2002; Huges 2010; Scruton 2001). Aesthetic experience on these terms was sought as an explanation for how reason might acquire the ability to discern.

But our capacity for judgment makes us uncomfortable when it comes to conditions of “truth” – for example, within discourses of science or journalism which as likely as not view aesthetics as a contaminant. I want to suggest that such a view is genealogically near-sighted and rooted in an unwillingness to acknowledge the effects of power (and resistance) on the production of discursive legitimacy. My claim in this dissertation

in a nutshell is that discursive truths not only have aesthetic dimensions, but that aesthetic experience plays a key role in determining what emerges discursively within tensions between power and resistance as legitimate forms of “truth” and knowledge in public culture. As such, it is an overlooked and significant dynamic in the formation of public understanding.

The production of public knowledge in the spectacle-oriented, networked and digital public cultures of the early 21st century seem more and more influenced by affective states (Clough 2007; Massumi 2001). There is, some suggest, an aesthetic turn of sorts to be accounted for in popular culture that has coincided with the postmodern erosion of faith in reason and “truth” in Western philosophy (Bird 2009; Cramerotti 2009; Ferguson 1999; Jonsson 2004; Lanham 2006; Massumi 2001; Shields 2010). But even with these undeniable shifts, there remain entrenched divisions between questions of truth, power and communication on the one hand, and questions of aesthetics, affect and emotion on the other. My argument in this dissertation challenges this categorical distinction and makes two important assertions: (1) that the pre-cognitive event of aesthetic experience extends well beyond traditional notions of beauty and emotion to encompass rationally ambiguous categories of experience that emerge from both the relational and symbolic dimensions of communication; and, (2) that by overlooking these categories of meaningfulness, we overlook an important opportunity for understanding in clearer terms how power moves through, organizes and is organized by communicative acts.

The choice of journalism as the domain of my inquiry into aesthetics may strike some as misplaced. Why not, for example, make such an inquiry in the arts where there is a tradition of aesthetic analysis? My answer is simple: aesthetic analysis in the fine arts

does not have to answer to the discursive demands of “truth”. I bring to this study my personal experience as a citizen journalist – in community radio for some years, and later as a producer of public affairs programming through community television, and still later as a freelance writer and pirate radio broadcaster in places as far flung as Chapel Island Reserve in Cape Breton and on Vancouver’s East Side. The forms “truth” takes struck me then and now as more varied in non-mainstream cultures than within the professional news flows that dominate public culture in Canada, a trend that seems to be accelerating with the expansion of peer cultures and public participation in cultural production through online networks and digital technologies (Benkler 2006). My question then and now is about truth-value and whether or not an element of mainstream news’ relationship with the production of hegemony can be linked to attributes other than those explainable through the rational expositions of interests.

Journalism remains it seems in a state of crisis in Western economies. Failing and transforming media industries in the wake of new technologies and changing cultural practices and deteriorating qualities of information are two of the most widely cited concerns (Barnett and Gaber 2002; Fuller 2010; McChesney and Nichols 2011). Often overlooked in these accounts are the ways changing cultural habits are influencing public expectations about “truth”. John Hartley calls it a shift towards a “redactional society” where collective understanding of public knowledge increasingly allows for the ongoing critical evolution of truths in iterative rather than finite cultural forms (Hartley 2000; Jones 2009). Within these increasingly decentralized networks of cultural production, some kinds of traditional boundaries are softening — for example, between news and entertainment, documentary and fiction, truth and rhetoric, science and art, etc. (Bird 2009;

Cramerotti 2009; Lanham 2006; Shields 2010). What is at stake in the perception of “crisis” in part is the future of public knowledge and implications of its demise for democratic accountabilities. A better understanding of how aesthetic experiences influence truth-claims helps to explain why some of these changes can occur (for example, why the categorical distinctions between fact / fiction and news / entertainment can be blurred) without precipitating intellectual and political collapse.

The Arab Spring and Occupy Movements in 2011, the Red Square student protests in Quebec and Spanish Indignants in 2012, the Russian electoral revolt also in 2012, are current examples of spectacular objections to power and its abuses in contemporary society. Resistance and dissent manifest as they have in these instances in the embodied confrontations of mass protest, but they also manifest through cultural forms. The conditions of knowledge advance some social relations over others (Foucault [1966] 2008; [1969] 2007). Discursively speaking, to protest power, at some level, is to protest “truth”. We are, as Foucault says, “constrained” and “condemned” to “confess or to discover” the truth of power that society demands: “Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit” (Foucault 1980, 93). The question this research sets out to answer, at least in part, is how one goes about protesting the “truth” without being considered a fool or insane.

Coming at this through the other gate, we might also ask what self-respecting journalist will admit to being a patsy for power? Journalism’s professional self-appraisals have largely ignored the difficulties of “eventualization”, Michel Foucault’s term for the point at which the legitimacies of power and boundaries of knowledge are made evident in the “connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on

which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident” (Foucault 1991, 76); or in other words, the inextricable links between power and knowledge reflected in knowledge outcomes and the effects of power generated by the contents of knowledge (Foucault 2007a, 59). For journalists, ‘speaking truth to power’ remains one of the hallmarks of excellence, not to mention credibility. The conundrum is that genealogically speaking, ‘speaking truth to power’ is all we are allowed to do.

To be clear, by “genealogy” I mean in the narrow sense of an “historical knowledge of struggles” (Foucault 1980, 83). It is an idea that goes to the heart of Foucault’s critique of knowledge (Foucault 1980, 83):

Let us give the term *genealogy* to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today. [emphasis in the original]

In other words, genealogies reflect histories of the limits of domination, where domination reflects when “people buy into constraints that entrap them in asymmetrical relations that blind them to their real range of possibilities” (Hoy 2004, 82), and where resistance and dissent reflect capacities of subjects to encounter the discursive conditions of “truth” (including their own subjectivities) in a creative, productive and disruptive way. What is at stake are the procedures of epistemic legitimation from within which the discursive distinctions between rationality/madness and truth/falseness are made. A genealogical approach to knowledge looks for these procedures in the circulation of “truth” in public culture and by extension in the discursive encounter between subjective experience and the conditions of its domination.

Aside from the obvious embarrassment genealogy causes certain kinds of journalistic integrity, the *lacuna* in reconciling genealogical and journalistic approaches to

“truth” stems in part, I suggest, from a general reluctance on the part of some scholars to consider the aesthetic dimensions of public knowledge. As eventualization suggests, rationality’s hold on “truth” is not iron-clad. Aesthetic experience offers a category of meaningfulness even while eluding rational and empirical verifiability. This is not the sociological ‘aesthetics’ of Raymond Williams or Pierre Bourdieu – in essence, an ideology whose primary sociological effect is to mask the political and economic contexts within which the cultural industries operate (Fluck 2002). Nor is it the discredited aesthetics of universal value touted within disciplines of art history as a means to valorize some forms of expression over others and to render canons of cultural appreciation that, in hindsight, seem more like thinly veiled extensions of racialized, gendered, classed, etc. forms of domination (Murray and Murray 2006). It is, however, an aesthetics that is deeply involved in arranging relations of power — a “redistribution of sensibility”, as Jacques Rancière says (2008), instrumental to perceptions of reality. Aesthetic experience addresses the autonomic responses of the body to sensory stimulation, including the sensory stimulation of written and oral language and other cultural symbols. In this study, I identify four aesthetic qualities at play in mediated forms of “truth”: ambiguity, *sensus communis* (a sense of belonging or cultural identity), exemplary validities (future conditions whose validity is rooted in subjective agencies such as expectation, obligation, commitment, etc.) and modes of apprehension (the meta-interpretive conditions of communication that guide understanding in the circumstances, such as genre, context and social setting, knowledge field, etc.). Of especial significance, these attributes reveal ontological events at work in public truth-claims that manifest through expectations of trust and relationality and that implicate authors and readers within frameworks and structures

of competing legitimacies. When authors and creators make decisions in addressing “truths” in their cultural texts, structures of legitimacy of power and domination are confronted in the communicative act itself. These are the generative domains of subjectivities, be they hegemonic or transgressive in orientation.

This non-rational dimension of knowledge production is helpful for understanding how it might occur that “truth” changes, how the articulated cycles of power/truth/power/truth-etc. can be interrupted, how experiences can migrate from subjugated to meaningful. Legitimacy, I will argue, is a means by which — the territory of meaning, the framework of criteria, the pattern of assessments through which — experience becomes knowledge through discourse. Language acts require contemplation of audience(s), an orientation through which one encounters expected structures of legitimacy in an effort to guide meaning to particular horizons of understanding. These are not — and this must be made clear — questions of audience effects. They are rather questions of meaning, integrity and trust that emerge in the creation of ‘language acts’ that instantiate us in relationships and force us to take a stand on who we are in relation to others through expectations about, and obligations and commitments to the world. When journalists render “truths” that they say reflect states-of-affairs in the world, they necessarily *create* elements of it and, at times, in doing so, alter the conditions of possibility from which they can emerge.

My case studies are drawn from dissenting cultures in a Canadian context, and will help to demonstrate how aesthetic tactics can be used to challenge the conditions of domination on which knowledge depends, and to assert competing structures of legitimacy for other and competing kinds of knowledge. In my assessment of the role of aesthetic expe-

rience in the epistemic legitimacies of news-truth, each of my case studies offers a compelling example of what could be, at least aesthetically, a credible approach to journalism – credible because of how aesthetic elements are integral to the legitimacies of discursive truth, including journalism.¹

My first case – *The Dominion* magazine – demonstrates just this, a traditional journalistic mode of apprehension (albeit with a twist that inverts certain characteristic forms of domination, as I will explain). *The Dominion* is a 30 page news magazine produced five times annually through a nationally networked citizens journalism project with the tagline “news from the grassroots”. *The Dominion* tactically uses an objective mode of apprehension and radical exemplaries to challenge the legitimacies of the legitimacies of various hegemonic forms of social organization including capitalism, colonialism and Western liberal democracy generally.

My second case, *Broken City Lab*, is an artist collective established to mobilize public imagination in Windsor, ON towards civic decision-making through enigmatic interventions of text in public spaces. *Broken City Lab* tactically engages the production of collective identity and ambiguities of genre and meaning in their challenges to disparaging and dominant narratives about the City of Windsor and those who live there.

My third case is a sculpture installation by Canadian artist Allyson Mitchell comprised of naked female sasquatches, between 12 and 15 feet tall, created as part of Mitchell’s ongoing Deep Lez project, a series of art works intended to (re)claim space in public

¹ There are many other reasons why my case studies might be excluded from the category of ‘news’ and journalism, for example, the values associated with newsworthiness which encompass attributes such as uniqueness, the status/celebrity/numbers of those involved, temporal freshness, legal defensibility, reporting routines, etc. I am not making a claim as to the newsworthiness of my case studies, but rather that their aesthetic tactics of legitimacy are no more or less reflective of “truth” than the aesthetic conventions of traditional journalism.

culture for radical lesbian identity. *Ladies Sasquatch* tactically engages playful modes of apprehension and ambiguities of nostalgia/mythology to invite publics into a sense of belonging with radical political lesbian identity.

My fourth case is the Association for Socially Acceptable Terrorism's *Etat d'urgence*, an experimental community that invites thousands of Montrealers and hundreds of homeless to share public space at a cultural festival over a period of five days in December. *Etat d'urgence* is challenging dominant "truths" about homelessness and homeless people by tactically engaging in the production of senses of belonging that invert dominant experiences (of the homeless as excluded) through improvisational experiences organized within a framework that only makes sense within the exemplary validities of the homeless being worthy of inclusion in society.

My argument about aesthetics and discursive truth will unfold in four parts: (1) I argue that journalism's epistemic stability is a performance that obscures unavoidable conditions of communicative uncertainty. (2) I take the position that traditional journalism's dominance over the techniques of "truth" in popular culture has generally ignored the ontological implications of its own engagement and in particular the ways language and communication instantiate subjectivities and social relations. (3) I contend that these categories of experience are not easily accounted for within the rational, provable domain of traditional, Western forms of epistemic legitimacy, and yet they fundamentally inform the "epistemic rituals" delineating knowledge from its other, i.e. folly, falseness, madness, or what Foucault called "subjugated knowledges" (Foucault 1980; 1986). As meaningful and yet extra-rational and non-cognitive experiences they reflect categories of meaningfulness that can be accounted for within a framework of aesthetics that also en-

compasses paradoxical modes of apprehension and conceptual indeterminacy. And finally, (4) I make the claim that the process of eventualization turns in part on the conditions of legitimacy manifest in cultural texts, a discursive territory within which the struggle over knowledge takes place and within which aesthetic experience plays an important role. A public claim for experience that resists the effects of domination must encounter the conditions of possibility for legitimacy under terms set within relations of domination. The condition of domination depends in part on the visibility of power's expectations. The legitimacy of these expectations, in turn, rests on their being legible, credible and appropriate in the circumstances. It should be remembered that a condition of possibility for domination is freedom — that which domination comes up against and seeks to control and without which domination dissipates into will (Foucault 1997). It is within the author/creator's aesthetic encounter with the conditions of legitimacy for relations of power that the possibility for resistance - or acquiescence - arises and is, at least in part, meted out, arranged, and distributed.

In the first chapter, I consider the epistemic legitimacy of journalism: what is news "truth", what are its methods of verification, what are its limitations. I conclude by reviewing the scant literatures on news aesthetics and how style and form have been considered integral to elements of news production. In Chapter 2, I consider the implications of Foucault's genealogical approach to knowledge for journalistic "truth": historical contingency, rules of selection and inclusion, and literary potentials for self subject-making. I assert that truth-claims in journalism engage their authors/creators in the ontologically significant production of identity and relationality, the ontological implications of which can be addressed through a reinterpretation of Kantian aesthetics. Kant's four moments

of beauty are suggestive of categories of aesthetic experience that reflect representational and relational dimensions of communication in the procedures and practices of making truth-claims. In Chapter 3, I consider more closely the attributes of discursive “legitimacy”. The expectations of power must be visible to those who would be produced and controlled, which in turn demands their legibility, credibility and appropriateness. The legitimacy of power’s expectations suggests territories of subjective meaningfulness within which aesthetic experience can be used to undermine the legitimacies of power and assert competing legitimacies.

In Chapter 4, I re-introduce the case examples of resistant cultural production considered in this study; I delineate the terms on which I consider the production of knowledge and its resistance valid; and, briefly, I outline my aesthetic approach to the limits of knowledge as applied.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 contain the analysis of my case studies. Chapter 5 considers the competing structures of legitimacy at work in each cultural text: the assertions of integrity by the author(s), the integrities of expected audiences and aspects of public knowledge (i.e. relations of power) that are being encountered and challenged within texts. In Chapter 6, I focus on the aesthetics of representation. In the first part, I consider how radical news production in *The Dominion* and *Etat d’urgence*’s cultural festival for the homeless use modes of apprehension as an aesthetic tactic to challenge public perceptions of capitalism and homelessness respectively. In the second part, I focus on how Allyson Mitchell’s *Ladies Sasquatch* and the public art interventions of *Broken City Lab* challenge, on the one hand hostilities to lesbian identity, and on the other dominant narratives about Windsor through the tactical engagement of ambiguity and enigma. And in Chapter 7, I

consider the aesthetics of relationality. In the first part, I look at the aesthetics of identity at play in *Ladies Sasquatch* and *Etat d'urgence*: both tactically engage senses of belonging to overcome hostilities to the experiences of lesbian politics and homelessness, respectively, and playfully invite publics into reordered and radically dissenting identities. And in the second part, I focus on the aesthetics of exemplary validities at play in *Broken City Lab's* public texts and in *The Dominion's* radical news coverage. The former manifests the engaged public it expects through the imaginative performances demanded by its interventions. The latter constitutes an audience whose rejection of human suffering grounds the assertion of public authority, especially by those who benefit least from the outcome of capitalism in liberal democratic contexts.

These case studies demonstrate the complexities of aesthetic legitimacy in the discursive production of knowledge. The aesthetic tactics employed distort “truth” only in the sense that “truth” is grounded in the legitimacy of relations of power, and aesthetic experience describes a means by which subjects encounter these conditions and can alter them. Genealogically, there is no distortion, only the production of discourse and its legitimacies. Correspondence with a non-discursive reality is not in question because of the impossibility of ever assessing the “accuracy” of such a relationship from within knowledge, language and discourse itself. That said, I am not suggesting that reality isn't out there, but rather than what we have to work with in the human condition is our relationships, which are structured through the expectations of power and domination and the sensibilities these require for objectification and visibility. “Truth” always has its consequences in action, and how we get to “truth” (and get away from it) are critical kinds of understanding.

One of the strengths of the framework being proposed in this dissertation is a better understanding of the range of aesthetic tactics available to cultural dissidents for encountering the limits of their own intelligibility and for transgressing them without subjugating their experiences to power's needs. It is often hard to know exactly where one kind of aesthetic experience leaves off and another begins in part because these experiences are not organized temporally. Aesthetic experience manifests in the fractions of time preceding meaning, narrative, analysis, reason, and so on. We can only in hindsight, as this study attests, consider the conditions from within which these affective states manifest. Aesthetic experience emerges through the autonomic systems of the human body – a sensorially oriented form of experience which colours and, to my point, can colour when engaged tactically, the legitimacies of both domination and cultural resistance to its effects.

The importance of these assertions to an understanding of mass media communications should be apparent. In wider cultural contexts where collective making-sense-of-the-world and making-sense-of-experience cultural texts flourish, there is an underappreciated dimension of aesthetic experience that not only plays a key role in the assertions, affirmations and assessments of what is “real”, but through which relations of power and dominance seek to maintain their influence over social outcomes.

Chapter 1 - Making Sense of News “Truth”

In this chapter, I review the literatures of journalism studies to consider (i) epistemological stability in news discourse, including methods of truth and verification, problems of objectivity, and framing; (ii) the role of expected audiences in the constitution of news truth; and (iii) news aesthetics, styles and form. I have chosen “journalism” as the domain of inquiry because of my own experiences as a citizen-journalist, but also because journalism is the primary form of mediated “truth” in most Western popular cultural contexts. Journalism expects general audiences and as such provides a widely agreed upon (albeit informally) template of sorts for how “truth” becomes culturally visible.

Journalism is a difficult activity to define. It brings together an array of social elements into complex patterns of interaction: audiences, media organizations, cultural texts, advertisers and institutions, symbols, cultural understandings, and groups and individuals vying for political advantage both behind the scenes and within what gets reported in the news. Zelizer (2004a) identifies a range of academic approaches that have informed the study of journalism -- political science, history, sociology, linguistics, and cultural studies – each with its own objects of study from within the complexities that give rise to journalistic cultural contributions. And there are yet other approaches that focus on journalisms’ constituting elements: the people, practices, institutions and texts.²

² To clarify, in Zelizer’s typology the political science of journalism focuses on the role and importance of journalism in democratic contexts; the history of journalism focuses on how journalism emerged and has changed over time; the sociology of journalism tends to focus on professional practices and the rituals of journalists, news values, effects research, the political economy of news organizations and the role of journalism in the production of ideology and hegemony; the linguistic analysis of journalism emphasizes the content of news including their semiological, narrative and rhetorical dimensions; and finally the cultural inquiry into news, the most relevant to my study, emphasizes news as a cultural resource within a context in which news symbols and their production/reception informs rituals of epistemic authority in the production of identity and citizenship, and that are generally critical of traditional views of journalism (i.e. news as a mirror of reality, etc.). Of course, these categories are somewhat artificial in that scholarship

Defining the exact parameters of what is and is not journalism remains an unsatisfying task.

Michael Schudson (2003) suggests that journalism can be understood as a “set of institutions that publicizes periodically (usually daily) information and commentary on contemporary affairs, normally presented as true and sincere, to a dispersed and anonymous audience in a discourse to be taken publicly important” (2003, 11). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) suggest that journalism is “the system by which we get our news” (3) whereby news they mean the information citizens need to be “free and self-governing” (12). Ward (2004) suggests that news is “empirical, changing, novel, observational, factual, a description of events in the external world” (191-2), a system for providing “the news and analysis by which a society communicates with itself, allowing it some measure-of self-government” (9). Stuart Adam, in describing his own work in *Notes Towards a Definition of Journalism* (1993) writes (Adam 2001, 324):

In summary, I argued, first that journalism is the reporting and commentary in the public media on ideas and events as they occur. Then I defined journalism as a distinctive form of expression – a way of thinking and rendering just as poetry and prose fiction are forms of expression – comprising distinctive and identifiable elements, which I identified by breaking journalism apart. The separate elements I proposed for the analysis of the texts of journalism were (1) news as the product of something called news judgment; (2) fact and evidence as the product of reporting; (3) linguistic, narrative, and representational technique; and (4) methods of in-

about journalism often draws on many of these scholarly traditions and these disciplinary distinctions exist primarily for heuristic purposes. They do not necessarily reflect clearly bounded attributes of social reality. Nonetheless, they do help to understand and to organize what is a rather disaggregated and diverse body of literature.

Zelizer’s other approach to the diversity of journalism scholarship is through their primary object of study. Scholarship that focuses on journalists tends to be that produced by journalists themselves, while more sociological writing is generally done by outsiders looking in at the profession. The former focuses on standards of professionalization, practices of verification and styles of expression within a framework that more or less accepts news as a mirror on reality. The latter is interested in the ways that news outcomes are influenced by the perceptions, social status, practices, work flows, accreditation, news values, and habits of journalists – both known and unknown to the journalists themselves. An institutional focus expands the circle of influence on news outcomes to include the institutional settings where news gets made. The influence of organizational pressures and exigencies is considered along with the economic and political contexts within which news organizations operate. And finally, a focus on the texts examines news outcomes themselves and their patterns of language, sound and visual presentation. The two dominant strands of text analysis are content analysis which seeks to discover meaning by analyzing the constituent parts of texts, and a more culturally situated view of texts as symbols created, disseminated and received within collective and collaborative social processes.

terpretation or analysis.

Barbie Zelizer summarizes how journalists themselves think about what it is that they do: a sense for the goings on of humanity that should be accurately publicized in the public interest (2004, 30-32). Broadly stated, journalism seems to involve at the very least “true” accounts of events relevant to self-governance, by which I infer a relevance to political action. That said, my specific interest in journalism is in how “truths” are rendered: what are the conditions and techniques of epistemic legitimacy?

Truth and verification in news media

As Zelizer writes, journalism’s “presumed legitimacy depend[s] on its declared ability to provide an indexical and referential presentation of the world at hand” (2004a, 187). Winch (1997) argues that distinguishing journalism from other forms of public discourse tends to focus on four attributes: (i) the epistemological assertion that that the news grounds legitimacy in truth; (ii) the functional assertion that the news has an informational intent; (iii) the methodological assertion that the news has specific practices and values for creating informational truths; and (iv) the assertion that news manifests in certain kinds of institutions, i.e. news media, who’s work shares these traits (Gieryn et al. 1985; Winch 1997).³ My interest is epistemological and to some extent methodological:

3 Significantly, in Gieryn et al.’s framework for the boundary-work of science, they also include ontology as an attribute over which categorical disputes about inclusion/exclusion as science are fought. In his own boundary-work rhetoric, Winch categorically rejects ontological assertions as relevant for journalism. Part of my claim in this dissertation is that journalism has an ontological dimension that it has generally refused to acknowledge and that the unacknowledged ontological elements encompass aspects of aesthetic experience which remain deeply embedded within notions of journalistic “truth”.

a consideration of how those who participate in journalistic discourse achieve “truth”. Which is not, to be clear, a question of whether “truth” is achieved; mine is *not* a question of fidelity of representation to a corresponding reality. A genealogical construction of knowledge makes such a line of inquiry superfluous — or, to say it differently, it casts significant doubt on what such questions will reveal, and asks instead what relations of power must be in place in order for those particular “truths” to make their appearance in the first place.

The question of genealogical “truth” in journalism has been surprisingly understudied, an oversight due in large part to the seemingly irreconcilable tension between journalism’s continuing valorization of absolute forms of truth and cultural studies’ embracing of contingent forms of truth (Zelizer 2004b). This is in part the *lacuna* my research is intended to address, and it is an academic reconciliation that Zelizer argues is within reach (2004b, 114):

Recognizing that there is a reality out there and that, in certain quarters, truth and facts have currency does not mean letting go of relativity, subjectivity and construction. It merely suggests yoking a regard for them with some cognizance of the outside world. And surely cultural studies is strong enough these days to do that.

In Canada, such a reconciliation has been contemplated in pedagogical terms by Skinner et al. (2001) who suggest that understanding the production of “truth” by journalists might better be served by focusing on “the very methodologies, languages, technologies, cultural assumptions, economic imperatives and literacy systems through which it is sought and represented” (346). In other words, that suggestion is that reconciliation can

perhaps be found in the procedures and practices of “truth”. Along these lines, I would like to also suggest aesthetics as one of those procedural strategies at work in journalistic practices of “truth”.

The Epistemology of News

In the late 19th and early 20th century, journalists and their organizations were encouraged to adopt a science-based interest in facticity, objectivity, verification, and a presentation style that used stripped down language to address sociological accounting and indexing of social reality (Conboy 2010; Schudson 2003; Ward 2004). “Professional” journalism in North America and many parts of Europe adopted the conceit of presenting a “mirror” on the world through carefully cultivated forms and techniques.

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of influence at work in the production of news: news values (the more ephemeral sensibilities that guide a journalists productive decision-making) and news conventions (the procedures, techniques, work flow regimes, and legal considerations that determine thresholds of professional legitimacy). Herbert Gans’ widely cited study of American commercial news media in the 1970s (CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time Magazine) revealed an amalgamation of forces influencing how news comes to be: on the one hand, pressures from the internal professional and organizational value preferences, and on the other, conventions of news and perceived needs of the product itself – its quality, format, style, novelty, pace,

clarity, etc., a set of considerations rooted commercial competitive demands and expectations about audiences.

Law (2004) distinguishes between what he calls “internal” forces such as the values, practices, desires, and ideologies of the journalists themselves, and “external” forces that reflect pressures brought to bear through organizational ownership, legislation and regulation, technical constraints and the nature of news events. Law’s larger argument is for a “critical realist” perspective of news values that recognizes both objective and subjective influences (i.e. internal and external) in news production, as a way to reconcile organizational, political-economic and cultural approaches to the study of journalism. “News values” for Law describes a programmatic pattern of practices and conventions shaped by external and internal forces that select and prefer some facts over others — an epistemological bias away from the abstraction of social structure, for example, and towards the empirical, people and events. Law calls this “issue avoidance” and a tendency that diminishes explanations in favour of descriptions.

For my purposes, the distinctions between these categories of influence are less important than is an awareness that journalists in their construction of news-truth must navigate competing 'structures of legitimacy' — the varieties of professional concerns and organizational protocol that make up “news values”. Some of these value structures are of little interest for present purposes, for example, news values related to the selection of news (such as the presence of conflict, relevance (proximity) to audiences, timeliness, ability of journalist to simplify and personalize the story, the unexpectedness of the event

described, continuity with existing news narratives, fit within categories of coverage, reference to elite nations, cultural specificity, reference to elite persons, and negativity; Allan 1999; Romano 1986). What is of interest are the principles and methods of objectivity and related techniques of “truth”.

A recent proposal for a reinvigorated structure of news legitimacy can be found in Kovach and Rosenstiel’s (2007) plea for a return to “core” values (what they call the “elements of journalism”). Kovach and Rosenstiel are responding to concerns about deteriorating qualities of news information in the current upheavals in the cultural industries. They argue that unchecked commercialization is destroying journalistic credibility — a phenomenon sometimes called the “tabloidization” of the news media (Bird 2009). In response, they propose standards aimed at protecting and insulating journalism from destructive tendencies. Accordingly, professional journalists should: (i) tell the truth; (ii) strive for loyalty to the public; (iii) work within a discipline of verification; (iv) maintain independence; (v) use their resources to monitor power; (vi) maintain an orientation geared towards public criticism; and (vii) exercise personal conscience in their duties. The purpose of the news, they argue, regardless of technological changes, is to render true accounts of the world so that the public can act to both hold institutions and individuals accountable for their actions and self-govern in a democratic context.

Kovach and Rosenstiel also observe that within their idealized form of professional journalism there are two kinds of truthfulness at work: notions of accuracy in terms of an accurate correspondence to a real world; and notions of coherence in terms of mak-

ing sense and offering explanation and analysis of what is real. Both are equally necessary for what they call “journalistic truth” which acknowledges that accurate facts mean little until they are arranged into a meaningful order. Structuring facts into a meaningful order, they argue, is the role of ‘objectivity’, by which they mean the presentation of data in neutral language and without the reporter’s interests influencing the arrangement. They identify five core principles of objectivity in what they call a “science” of reporting: (i) never add anything that was not there (ii) *never deceive the audience* (iii) use transparent methods and motives (iv) rely on original reporting (v) exercise humility. Of particular interest is the second principle about deception which roots an element of the professional cultivation of objective reporting (even in its idealized form) in the journalist’s necessarily subjective perception of what is and is not “deception”.

Needless to say, ideal statements of principle like those articulated by Kovach and Rosenstiel become murkier when translated into practice. Gans (1979), for example, found a host of competing factors at work in the newsroom, distinguishing between values *in* the news and values *from* the news, the latter oriented towards the impact of stories on audiences and the former referring to the “preference statements” by journalists within their reports about significant issues. Preference statements reveal values by journalists explicitly or implicitly influencing how they arrange their factual accounts in anticipation of particular audiences. Gans further identifies internal and external pressures, the former being professionally oriented concerns such as access to sources, considerations of story substantiveness, suitability of story to medium, format structures, principles of objectivi-

ty, novelty, story quality, balance; and the latter those that inform news production decisions from outside the organizations of production such as commercial contexts, audience expectations and political pressures (Gans 1979). He singles out ‘sources’ as having a key role in shaping news-truth in that it is the version of reality put forward by sources that is usually addressed in one way or another in the news. Source bias has been tracked in numerous studies that show, for example, that most ‘authorized knowers’ in news media are government officials (Manning 2001; Mason 2007; Schudson 2003; Sigal 1973; Soloski 1989), white (Owens 2008), and male (Ross 2007; Zeldes et al. 2010). Not only will this necessarily reflect a certain set of experiences and expectations, but sources can also be used as symbols to personify abstract ideas and values, and they can be used to shift the register of facticity away from whatever is being said and towards the fact of its having been said (Sigal 1986).

Similarly, Gaye Tuchman (1978) has described how the practices of commercial news organizations influence news outcomes within what she calls the “news net”, news gathering based on both centralized and distributed networks (including news bureaus) and hierarchies of perceived relevance to audiences, and the ways workflow exigencies, categorizations and sociological indexing objectify the world through naturalization and implication. It is the organizational arrangements and practices, she argues, that drives much of what ends up as news and how it appears when it gets there.

But focus on work flows also tends to emphasize *why* what ends up as news does so. My inquiry is slightly different. I am asking: once it is there, why is it believed and

what are the implications of getting it there? Of central importance to this inquiry is the role of ‘objectivity’.

The incarnation of objectivity as the dominant mode of apprehension for journalists and their audiences may be a modern phenomena, but objective news reporting is not a modern invention. According to Ward (2004), 16th and 17th century editors of pamphlets describing political events developed “an elaborate set of objective procedures” that sound surprisingly contemporary including fact checking, quoting sources, attributing comments, balancing sources and skepticism towards unverified claims — techniques adopted to help distinguish fact-based accounts from fictional writing (218). Printing press journalism emerged historically at a time when ‘facticity’ — an empirical and logical approach to discrete truths - was a relatively new but increasingly important dimension of cultural legitimacy. Barbara Shapiro (1999) describes this period in England as a flourishing “culture of fact” within which discourses of science emerged with careful methods for determining “facts” based on experimentation, measurement, and peer review. As the popularity of this empirical and rational orientation grew, it was adopted in the 18th century for literary endeavors including travel writing, journalism, history and law (Ward 2004).

Ward traces the intellectual esteem for objectivity to the philosophical writings of John Locke and Rene Descartes who saw in objectivity a means of disciplining and disengaging from subjectivity (Ward 2004). This, along with the valorization of reason as the methodology for ‘knowing’ that grounded Enlightenment thought through the 18th century, laid the groundwork for an enduring interest in a positivistic and knowable reali-

ty. Not, of course, without complications; Immanuel Kant's ([1781] 2003) questioning of the limits of reason also laid the groundwork for a somewhat different conception of objective knowledge, one that admitted the boundaries of knowability within human consciousness, but which still allowed for the formation of universal principles through public (that is, communicable) rational testing (Donald 2003; Ward 2004). Kant's rejection of reality untouched by the human mind notwithstanding, a narrower epistemic interest in a positivistic and "pure objectivity" persisted, especially in the sciences. Ward traces three variations of objective frames of reference that emerged: ontological or mechanical objectivity, which measured reality through the disinterested calibration of machines; epistemological or aperspectival objectivity, which sought the transcendence of impartial viewpoints; and procedural objectivity, which sought epistemic certainty in the statistical / quantitative analysis and formalization of disciplinary routines – all of which (although especially aperspectivity) have had their influence on journalistic endeavours (Ward 2004, 80-82).

Early advocates for the professionalization of journalism linked objective credibility to a "unity of method rather than aim" in the words of Walter Lippman, an approach that emphasized a discipline of verification and evidence in the pursuit of objective fact and which encouraged a profession of journalists as distinct from publicists (quoted in Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007, 83; see also Tuchman 1978; Ward 2004). The nature of truth in journalism is inseparable from the methods of its inquiry: the kind of truth sought is the presupposition to which certain avenues of investigation will necessarily proceed (Ward 2004). In this sense truth "regulates" and necessitates (and dictates) certain methods of its own inquiry. Ward argues that the methods of verification and

styles of representation associated with objectivity served “as a real-world constraint on our other goals” in the pursuit of journalistic truth (Ward 2004, 272). There are, according to Ward, six standards used by journalists to distinguish objective from subjective reporting: (i) factuality (the use of verified facts); (ii) fairness (balancing rival viewpoints fairly); (iii) non-bias (elimination of personal interests); (iv) independence (reporting without fear or favour); (v) non-interpretation (absence of opinion and interpretation); and (vi) neutrality (without favoritism) (2004, 19).

As a guide for the practitioner, objectivity as a goal has tended to manifest professionally as factuality and/or impartiality, each has its own methods of verification: fact checking procedures for the former and neutrality of voice and diversity of opinion for the latter (Westerstahl 1983). Stated slightly differently, objectivity has tended to require either balance (i.e. impartiality) or accuracy (i.e. the absence of distortion), and each has procedures and conventions to serve the competing epistemological needs of a relativist versus positivist orientation, respectively (Hackett 1984). Among professional journalists practicing today in the US and Europe, despite shared recognition of objectivity as an “important and indispensable professional value”, there remain differences in approach (Donsbackh and Klett 1993, 78). Journalists in the US and UK interpret objective aims as requiring them to act as mediators between interest groups requiring a fair and balanced approach to reporting, while among German and Italian journalists objectivity is achieved by investigating behind the points of view expressed to verify the “hard facts” behind the interests of actors (Donsbackh and Klett 1993). Each then demands that journalists apply certain kinds of different technique to the problems of representation.

Durham (1998) rejects altogether the routines associated with objectivity as a kind

of 'fact-filtering' mechanism that obscures certain kinds of experience while valorizing others. Durham draws comparisons between journalistic objectivity and scientific positivism, the latter having been accused of being a "dodge" used by socially powerful groups to ignore criticisms grounded in the experiences of gender, class and race. Durham argues that journalism similarly uses objectivity to narrow which points of view will be considered legitimate (Durham 1998, 125-6):

The reportorial canon of presenting all perspectives without any engagement with the political valences of such perspectives effectively prevents any progressive or emancipatory politics from developing out of journalism.

Durham's claim is that assertions are systematically excluded by the relationship between standards of objectivity and power, and that journalists must introduce a level of reflexivity into the routines of news-making in order to develop new hierarchies of sources that would emphasize those closest to and most effected by events.

In Tuchman's (1978) account of newspaper journalism in the 1970s, she described news-truth as emerging from a "web of facticity", a network of relationships, conventions, organizational exigencies, and procedures of verification and accuracy that determines what can and will appear in the pages of newspapers. Facts, she argues, are geared towards deadlines and their verification procedures are embedded in work flow efficiencies and routines. For example, not all facts attract the requirement for verification (Tuchman 1978, 86):

Put somewhat differently, to flesh out any one supposed fact one amasses a host of supposed facts that, when taken together, present themselves as both individually and collectively self-validating.

Another technique Tuchman describes is the use of quotes, which despite asserting only the fact of the quote itself often carry the weight of their content even in the ab-

sence of verification (Tuchman 1978, 86-7). The procedures, work flows, and standards of indexicality within notions of professionalism that together render something recognizable as a “true” story Tuchman calls a “strategic ritual” rooted in a concern to preempt public and professional criticism that might interfere with work flows (Tuchman 1972, 1978).

Stephen Ward also argues for introducing a higher level of reflexivity into the practices of journalists, what he calls a theory of “pragmatic objectivity” which views objectivity not as a goal but as an instrument for rational restraint, by which he means an approach to inquiry within the limitations of an always unknowable reality (2004, 263). Ward’s proposal is for “ubiquitous interpretation, a schema not unlike critical realism that acknowledges different spheres of reality where external stimuli become visible/shareable through interpretation into conceptual schema which are influenced by: distance from stimuli, degrees of generality (sensory, social, normative), revisability and intertextuality” (Ward 2004, 277). Ward’s “pragmatic objectivity” is a model for public scrutiny of a partially transcendent reality guided by disinterest (in the sense of elevating the pursuit of truth above all other interests), and integrity (in the sense of a willingness to admit fallibility) (Ward 2004, 281-3).

Ward encourages three standards by which to judge the objectivity of a claim: (i) routines of observation that are disinterested and reliable (ontological standards); (ii) rules of coherence such as logic and consistency (epistemic standards); and (iii) expectations concerning fairness and fallibility (procedural standards) (Ward 2004, 283-88). His larger argument is for understanding journalism’s standards as central to what he calls a “rhetorical theory of social truth” which views the public as engaged in “the public rhe-

torical system”, an informal and decentralized cultural process of arriving at one version or another of “public truth” (2004, 288-9). An understanding of states-of-affairs in the world would emerge from “an informal, interest laden public discourse on topics that elude certainty” (Ward, 2004, 290).

All of these difficulties – in extracting impartiality and accuracy from the work flows and routines that produce them; epistemic biases away from abstraction; necessarily subjective perceptions of deception; the importance of considerations of audiences on quality, format, medium of engagement and value preferences; competing frames of objectivity with their differing demands on verification; and fact filtering – have prompted some observers to describe journalism in performative terms. Broersma (2010) suggests that journalism can be understood as an attempt to “persuade readers that what it describes is real, which by successfully doing so, transforms an interpretation into truth – into a reality the public can act upon” (26). Roeh (1989) describes it as a rhetorical technique of storytelling that creates the impression of presenting reality as it is; an impression we will judge based on “how well [its authors] convince us that the distance between what the makers saw and what they show us transcends hypothesis” (Jackson 1988). In tallying the historical development of journalism, Ward describes the relationship between editor and their readers as a “rhetorical relationship” rooted in creating conditions of trust (2004, 121). As much effort went into advocating the ethical character of the editor in 17th century news sheets as it did to telling the story, and in the 19th and early 20th centuries, editors sought to reinforce relationships of trust with mass readerships in their vastly expanded diversities through virtues of political neutrality and procedural consistency and professionalism (Ward 2004). Anticipated audiences were being persuaded

to believe the contents based in part on the relationship of trust with journalists and news organizations.

But the ability to do this - to “transcend hypothesis” as Jackson says – has limits as described, and the very same discursive strategies that work towards accuracy and authority also work to conceal these limits. News-makers use quotes, eyewitness and expert testimony, and balance to bolster the legitimacy of their reporting, but these techniques also obscure epistemic *aporia* — truth claims become facts, genre and form suggest mimetic accuracy, and framing appeals to existing cultural codes of understanding independent of any “facts” that might be in question (Broersma 2010; Tuchman 1978). News conventions will structure how a story is told, its visual arrangement, and the genres of its telling (Broersma 2007). Hansen (2004) calls these narrative structures (in the context of television news) the dramaturgical “motor” of the story, what television journalists refer to as the ‘clothesline’: the chronological and dramatic structure on which news facts are ‘hung’ in the television presentation of a news story. These story structures and conventions exist independent from journalistic content and yet in their presentation are inextricable from it. The goals of describing the “real” produce procedural and expressive strategies that transcend the individuals and stories and translate from one person to the next (in the form of genre or convention) as an experience of truth.

Another way of approaching how values influence news outcomes is through framing, one of the dominant methods for understanding and analyzing news discourse. Gitlin (1980) describes frames as “principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, what matters ... Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists

who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports” (6-7). One of Gitlin’s main points in his study of how the Students for Democratic Society political movement was covered by mainstream news organizations in the 1960s, was that through “socialization, by the bonds of experience and relationships – in other words, by direct corporate and class interest – the owners and managers of the major media are committed to the maintenance of the going system in its main outlines ... private property ... national security state ... individual success within corporate and bureaucratic structures” (258). Frames, then, can stand for dominant cognitive models in news discourse used to organize the raw informational materials gathered by news-makers into structures of understanding that ultimately reflect group interests. Frames organize information in news stories in such a way so as to diagnose and define problems, evaluate and ascribe causation, and identify and endorse solutions (Entman 1993). Frames orient stories within structures of identified problems and controversies; causal relationships; and preferred solutions, and they act as a link between journalists, texts and audiences by providing cultural codes through rhetoric, themes, story structures and syntax that can be recognized reciprocally by both creators and audiences. Frames provide cognitive resources used to create, interpret and retrieve information from texts that are viewed not as static packages of symbols but rather as systems of “organized signifying elements that both indicate the advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of texts” (Pan and Kosicki 1993, 56).

But frames, too, have their limits. The polysemic potential of cultural texts has been widely studied, as has the role of audiences in the production of meaning (Ang 1985; Fiske 1987; Hall 1980; Hartley 1990; Radaway 1984). Stuart Hall’s notion of en-

coding and decoding, for example, suggests that meaning structures are used by producers to encode cultural messages, and also by audiences to decode them, but that there is no guarantee that creators and audiences will be drawing on the same meaning structures to arrive at the same meanings (Hall 1980). Hall suggests that audiences decode cultural messages (i) with reference to dominant-hegemonic codes; (ii) in negotiation with dominant codes; and (iii) oppositionally, in the sense that the cultural meanings drawn on to decode messages “retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference” altogether (138). The importance of competing frameworks of understanding will come to play a more central role in my analysis; I argue that which frameworks of reference structure meaning for authors/creators – be it hegemonic meaning, oppositional or something in between – ultimately depends on the question of legitimacy. (I address the issue of legitimacy in chapter three.)

Even with these potentials for diverse and oppositional meanings within texts, Hall acknowledges that texts carry within them the “limits and parameters within which the decoding will operate” (135). Even Fiske, who argues that the audience’s disruptive powers of interpretation make television something of a “semiotic democracy”, acknowledges what he calls strategies of “constraint” used by news-makers to interrupt and guide their viewers perceptions (1987, 236 and 296, respectively). “News controls the multivocality of the real,” he writes, “by narrative structure and a careful selection of which voices are accessed” (1987, 295).

Fiske’s ‘semiotic democracy’ is grounded in the pleasures of audiences which he argues are a resistant force (resistant to dominant meanings) in the sense that pleasure, like play, is unenforceable and that with it audiences are capable of using texts for their

own purposes (Fiske 1987). But pleasure has its own limitations. In her study of the polysemic potentials of an episode of *Cagney and Lacey* about abortion, Condit (1989) observes that some pleasures are more solitary and some more collective, and that solitary pleasures of escape and distraction are of an order altogether different from collective pleasures associated with mobilizing for social and political purposes. Her larger argument is for an empirically-based understanding of how audiences *actually* resist dominant coding, an inquiry well outside the ambit of this study, but she does acknowledge that audience decoding and meaning-making is dependent to some degree on the rhetorical strategies within texts, access to oppositional codes, and work/pleasure ratios in decoding texts (Condit 1989).

Texts inevitably, and often intentionally, contain ambiguity. Low levels of ambiguity, Rivera-Perez (1996) argues, encourage a preferred reading while high levels of ambiguity provide more resources and opportunities for variable interpretations. Fiske calls texts that are “multiple and full of contradictions” and that “foreground [their] own nature as discourse” by resisting coherence and unity “writerly and “avant-garde” (1987, 94). It is ultimately technique on the part of the creator that establishes these parameters: a technique that is conservative, for example, and that tries to restrict potential meanings or one that brings resources into play for oppositional readings (Rivera-Perez 1996). Hartley suggests that news is “hostile to ambiguities” and that it “seeks to validate its suppressions of the alternative possibilities intersecting its signs by reference either to ‘the facts of the story’ or to ‘normal usage’ (Hartley 1990, 24); or in other words, that closing “meaning potentials” is in part what news is supposed to do in its pursuit of objective reality. Frames can be understood as one of the primary ways that news-makers

try to close meaning potentials and constrain semiotic outcomes for audiences and to guide them towards preferred meanings (Entman 1993; Gamson et al. 1992.)

To summarize the preceding argument, I am making the case that the practices and conventions used in representing “truths” about the world in mediated forms have developed over time into professional standards and conventions concerning news values and news conventions. Journalism offers a template of sorts through these values and conventions for how “truth” becomes visible in public culture. The exact parameters of what is and is not journalism – produced through particular institutions, providing information required for self-governance, describing events as they occur – may be difficult to delineate with any precision in any practical sense, but my interest in journalism is more narrowly focused on how “truths” are rendered within conditions of epistemic legitimacy and the links between techniques of “truth” and aesthetic experience. As I have described, news values and conventions encompass a range of conditions that handicap notions of objectivity: fact filtering and issue avoidance, competing modes of objectivity, the role of subjective perceptions of deception, historically contingent values of trust, and the influence of work-flows and assumed facts on news-truth. These qualifying conditions in the production of news-truth have lead some scholars to refer to the production of “truth” in journalism as a performative gesture and set of practices and procedures aimed at persuading audiences in the truthfulness of a discourse while simultaneously obscuring the epistemological limits inherent in the presentation. One of the representational tools used in journalism to limit potential epistemic ambiguities is framing, a way of arranging information within cognitive models and structures that guide meaning into certain preferred territories of understanding based on sensibilities about expected audiences.

Frameworks of understanding will be encoded into the news-text: journalists take positions on what is “true” and guide audiences towards those “truths” and thus try to limit meaning potential.

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In Robert Hackett’s widely cited critique of objectivity and the problems with balance and distortion as regulating principles in journalism, Hackett argues for an ideological understanding of news as epistemologically incapable of objectivity but more than capable of expressing “concrete social relations” (1984, 238). Content analysis (of news) in this account suffers from an inability to identify underlying structures of relations between denoted symbols and how they come to be shared between news-makers and audiences, a weakness addressed in part, for example, by a framing analysis that looks for ideological (i.e. social relational reality) foundations for understanding. Hackett argues that ideology in news acts to naturalize social relations, by which he means render them taken for granted and unscrutinized in forms such as ‘common sense’ about the world we live in. It is through the rules of impartiality and balance that these naturalizations take place – not, as is traditionally thought, in their lapse and absence. Interpellation invites the viewer “to accept a certain position in order to read or decode the message” (Hackett 1984, 250). Together with realism – the performance of the real that is essential to news legitimacy – interpellation transforms social relations of power *de facto* into forms of “truth”. It is a process that smacks more of magic than empiricism, and black magic at that if we adhere to the belief that the news shouldn’t manufacture truth; but such a fear overlooks in critical ways the implications of “truth” for the discursive production of subjectivity.

The importance of the relationships involved between journalists, and their audiences cannot be overemphasized. As newspapers increased their dependence on advertising, for example, they sought larger and larger readerships who, as Dallas Smythe and other have suggested, became a valuable commodity (in an abstracted sense of selling audiences to advertisers) within the relationships driving news production. Readerships and audiences as commodities emerged as the source of “the actual market imperatives which drive, organize, and over-determine its programming content” (Artz 2008, 61; Smythe 1994).

In addition to the economic implications of producing audiences, there are also implications for civic and social identities. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* is widely cited for the proposition that early colonial newspapers were instrumental in the production of nationhood and national identities by uniting readerships of strangers through shared political and financial interests (Anderson [1983] 2006). Geraldine Muhlmann’s history of political journalism argues that journalists have always acted, even in their most dissenting orientations, to unify their audiences through the stratagems of witness and mediation (Muhlmann 2008). It is an argument that journalism’s truths *only* make sense within the manufactured public identities at work in the journalistic imagination. Objectivity, for example, in this light can be seen as a rhetorical strategy to overcome partisan differences among fragmented readerships (Muhlmann 2008; Ward 2004); muckraking as a form of witness: a unified public interest in the face of corruption

and transgressions; and 'new journalism' as ultimately positioning its audiences within an improved dominant and unified public (Muhlmann 2008).

In Klaus Jensen's (1990) argument against the continued emphasis on text analysis (he argues for a shift towards reception studies) as a method for understanding the power of media over audiences, he identifies social identity and belonging as the most important of three kinds of genre-relevance for 'the news' for audiences (along with information and entertainment). According to Jensen, news provides social contact for audiences, a way of situating self into wider social contexts. He identifies 'control' and 'distance' as key tensions in this process, the degree to which the news acts to give audiences a sense of "control" – not over the outcome of news events, but in the sense of being aware and able to "be concerned about the same questions" as others in the community (Jensen 1990, 69). The news in this sense can apparently provide resources for audiences to self-legitimate a sense of belonging.

Daniel Hallin (1994) makes a related argument; in his research, the sense of belonging manifest among Americans through their news media inculcates within it strong support for certain policy positions (and thus wars, domestic abuses of authority, injustice, etc.). Hallin is expressly defending the continued relevance of the Chomsky-Schiller propaganda model for understanding the influence of news media on the production and maintenance of power and now more widely associated with the work of Robert McChesney, among others. These approaches emphasize how political and economic relations of power influence why news appears as it does. Some kinds of policy support

(the invasion of Iraq, for instance) can readily be linked to aspects of national identity (Hallin 1994).

Harriman and Lucaites (2007) have described how iconic photographs in American journalism are used to orient individuals in the contexts of identity, obligation and power within the larger social context of the American Republic. The images act – become iconic, in fact – in large part because of the resources they offer to individuals encountering the fundamental tension in American identity between liberal individualism and democratic collective governance. Harriman and Lucaites are making a larger argument for the legitimacy and importance of visual communication as rhetoric (in the case of the iconic photograph as artifacts that are incorporated, appropriated and reappropriated into wider and wider discourses to serve rhetorical strategems), but the fundamental role of these images in the production of public identities exemplifies the ways identities and truths emerge from public acts of communication and the relations expressed within them.

These studies of the importance of audiences in news production admittedly emphasize qualities of reception: the use, in a sense, by audiences of news texts for the production of patriotism, belonging, policy support and civic identity. My study is focused on production, not reception. What these studies demonstrate of relevance to questions of production are potentials for production technique (for example, the use of frames that generate a sense of belonging rather than alienation) that bear directly on my analysis of aesthetics, a point to which I will return in great detail in chapter three.

To conclude, the values and conventions at work in the representation of “truth” in contexts of journalism bring into play an objective mode of apprehension that operates to both obscure epistemic weaknesses and limit meaning potentials. Traditional news strategies generally organize against ambiguity and polysemy and set as their goal a unity of meaning produced by unity of method.

In addition, news naturalizes relations as much as meanings through interpellated audiences. Journalism, in addition to any informational tasks it accomplishes, offers social identities so that expected audiences searching for a sense of belonging can accept identities through the subtleties and satisfactions of shared understanding. Strategically organizing kinds of ambiguity and creating senses of belonging together reflect key elements at play in journalism that are not easy to account for within the rational and empirical framework of legitimacy traditionally applied when considering the informational content of news. They are extra-rational experiences, and yet not irrational or irrelevant or in error *per se*; they remain meaningful – even if we cannot easily verify a sense of belonging or what exactly the truth-value of a sense of ambiguity might be. We must find another approach to understand these enigmatic and yet undeniable attributes of news discourse.

News Aesthetics, Styles & Forms

One approach to these enigmatic qualities of news truth (i.e. the role of cultural identities, practices of ‘epistemic obscuranta’, the strategic use of an objective mode of

apprehension) is through the category of experience housed under the notion of aesthetics. Broadly speaking, aesthetics describes meaningful cultural experience that is not easily accounted for in rational, positivist terms. There is little research on the subject of aesthetics in journalism and still less that specifically addresses the role aesthetics in asserting epistemic legitimacy. This reflects in part a long-standing uneasiness between “truth” and aesthetics going back to Plato who understood aesthetics as sensorial ‘other’ to knowledge, rationality and logic (Beardsley 1966). The emergence of a philosophy of aesthetics in the 18th century was linked to a critical distrust of the emancipatory potential of the rational subject (Ferry 1993). Immanuel Kant’s transcendental humanity recognized beauty only in the absence of understanding (1793] 2007). And Nietzsche’s ‘aesthetic man’ transformed the absence of understanding into a foundation for being, an epistemologically enigmatic condition that has arguably come to theoretical fruition in post-structural contingencies of truth and decentered subjectivities (Ferry 1993). It is no wonder that journalists and those that study what they do have largely ignored aesthetic philosophy. It asks in a sense for journalists to consider the impossibility of their relevance.

One of the few titles to brave this theoretical briar-patch is Alfredo Cramerotti’s *Aesthetic Journalism* (2009), an approach to journalistic objectivity that views it as a highly refined aesthetic tradition. Cramerotti argues that the style of objectivity adopted by professional journalists and mainstream news organizations in the early 20th century (as discussed above) emerged within structures and networks of power to become the status quo - or inseparable from it - and thus an aspect of how the status quo maintains its relations of domination. One of the cultural forms of dissent against these relations oc-

curs through what he calls aesthetic journalism, forms of doubt about the very nature of “truth” expressed in contemporary art practices but which use methods of verification and the conventions of professional journalism to render “truth” in different forms. “If journalism at large can be considered a view of the world,” Cramerotti argues, “...then aesthetics would be the view of the view; a tool to question both the selection of the material delivered, and the specific reasons for why things are selected” (Cramerotti 2009, 28).

Cramerotti distinguishes between the limited reality of traditional journalism and the created realities of art practice in this way: the former as a process to detract from reality in order to render a limited segment of it, and the latter as a process to add to reality in order to render possible truth. If we accept the post-structural limits on truth’s absolute forms, epistemological high ground from which one version of truth can cast aspersions on another vanishes; indeed, the high ground would seem to be where one can see the very contingency of “truth”, or at least its complications within systems of representation and communicative contexts. The use of conventions of journalism in the highly aestheticized context of art practice is allowing artists to share self-reflexive explorations of the nature of “truth” as a concept in ways that Cramerotti think could be adopted by journalists (Cramerotti 2009).

Cramerotti comes to the question of journalism through discourses of art, but few scholars have come to aesthetics through the discourses of journalism. Stuart Adam (1993) has made a case for journalism as an art form, in particular, as a form of expression and invention involving fact-gathering, story-telling and the creation of meaning. Adam recommends that students of journalism study poetry and prose fiction including the short story, painting, photography, film, graphics and design to develop linguistic and

narrative skills in addition to basic fact-gathering, interviewing, observation and documentation (Adam 2001). And Stefan Jonsson (2004), like Cramerotti, has argued that aesthetics offers to journalists a political tool for encountering structures of power that would deny public circulation of some kinds of journalistic truth. Jonsson suggests that current news routines and standards act as *de facto* forms of censorship against which traditional forms of journalism are not only helpless, but in which they are complicit through standards of positivism and objectivity. Artistic expression grounds knowledge in subjective conditions that Jonsson argues can overcome the ways dominant understandings use objective modes of apprehension to obscure experiences of human suffering and oppression.

Kevin Williams (2007) describes a history of journalism in which fact-centered reporting emerged as the dominant style of news at the expense of more literary traditions. European journalists resisted the loss of literary qualities and analysis that modern journalism in the 20th century demanded (Williams 2007). Broersma (2007) makes a case for the ways in which the changing forms and styles of journalism (including the shift to modern positivism and objectivity) provided guidance for readers to assimilate versions of reality. News genres in Broersma's estimation structure social reality through the use of specific styles: a reflective style, a partisan style, as a trustee for elite kinds of perspectives, as purveyor of popular narratives – each style attended by varying forms of presentation and conventions of practice. These styles and strategies structure our experiences of belief within particular contexts – of obligations and expectations and within relationships of power and status – and thus provide guidance for which modes of communication are appropriate in which settings. Broersma rejects the distinction between content

and form in news arguing instead that the experience of “truth” is inextricably bound in both. Style in this sense transcends the personal decision-making preferences and prejudices of individual journalists and instead reflects a collectively shared attribute of meaning organized through structure, design, and genre as a way of communicating a believable experience and for garnering status and authority for the journalist (Broersma 2007).

Matheson (2000) argues that the epistemological status of news as its own form of knowledge is directly linked to the styles employed in how it represented information, or in other words that changing styles in journalism (at least in England) reflected changes in discourse. Pre-modern British news tended towards reproducing texts produced by other authorities - letters, court judgments, royal decrees, excerpts from political pamphlets, telegraphs, transcripts. Victorian newspapers reflected this “hoarding” tendency through a kind of disorganized palimpsest of accumulated materials. The transition to modern forms of reporting included growing confidence in the journalist’s role in interpreting information and reassembling it into news stories. The newspaper adopted the role of indexer and cataloguer of social reality, an epistemic shift reflected in a more unified style of writing that emphasized brevity and neutrality and the ways newspapers organized their content (Matheson 2000).

Barnhurst and Nerone (2001) trace the ways the *forms* of news do social and political work (at least in the context of the newspaper) in how they organize material and represented relationships. The forms of newspapers invite readers into a world “molded and variegated to fit not only the conscious designs of journalists and the habits of readers, but also the reigning values in political and economic life” (6). In particular, forms encode systems of authority into which readers are invited to play a role, and yet which lie

“somehow beneath attention” (10). Attributes such as the use of visual aides, bylines, logotypes, newspaper sections, categories of content, typography and layout arrange and rearrange the landscape of reality into which readers enter when they read the morning paper. A critical relational attribute of this landscape, at least today in what the Barnhurst and Nerone suggest are the waning days of modernist newspaper design, is the reader as spectator - of sports, of politics, of financial affairs. The role of the public in political affairs is largely reduced to “the chorus that performs a role called public opinion” (2001, 300).

One of the more intriguing attempts to reconcile aesthetics with “truth” in a communicative context is Paul Campbell’s prescient recognition of aesthetics as a way to encounter language’s constitutive functions in communication (Campbell 1971). Campbell approaches language (i) as rooted in the formation of social identity; (ii) as a form of action itself; (iii) as the condition of being (one thinks of Heidegger, here, although no explicit references are made); and (iv) as the means by which being and environmental context are fused, and through these elements Campbell proposes an aesthetics of communication. It was a proposition that seems never to have been taken up.

The aesthetics of journalism remains something of a *lacuna* in the literature, especially an interest in the tensions - or dynamics - between aesthetics and epistemic legitimacy. Traditional journalism’s objective styles are rooted in particular relations of power, not least of which are reflected in the effects of a rational, positivist, scientific and empirical cultural orientation. The 20th century and its collection of political traumas and genocidal tragedies stands as a testament to the limitations of rational consciousness as foundation for political emancipation. But the point is not to reject rational epistemology

in toto, but rather to better understand how power moves through “truth” and *vice versa* in a cultural context. Contemporary discourses and practices of art are challenging some of these interrelations of truth-styles and power through expressive installations and artifacts that doubt the foundation of truth itself (or at least how we go about getting at it), all the while using the methods of verification, conventions and practices of professional journalism. Styles of knowing, as opposed to what can be known, elude easy justification in traditional epistemic term. Some histories of journalism point to the epistemic content of style as a more modernist approach to news-making emerged in the post-Victorian period in England. And there are those who draw attention to language’s constitutive qualities, and the ontological roots of language in 'being', and how this must influence how we constitute ourselves and the world around us of which we are inextricably a part. In the next chapter, I will propose a framework based on a reinterpretation of Kantian aesthetic philosophy for both taking account of just such ontological implications in language and for assessing the varieties of extra-rational attributes of cultural “truth” in aesthetic terms.

CHAPTER 2 – An Aesthetic Approach to Discursive Truth

Having encountered a credible basis for doubt in the epistemic stability of journalism's production of truths, I turn now to the work of Michel Foucault and John Searle to consider respectively the role of power in the production of truth and the ontological implications of language acts.

From Foucault, I develop an understanding of journalism as bound within the conditions of discourse. i.e. the procedures and criteria for what is allowed to circulate as "truth" manifest through relationships of power. In the normal course of events, what resists the effects of power is consigned to categories of error, madness, folly, irrelevance. Subjugated knowledges, as Foucault called them, are the unorganized, silenced, noncirculating accumulations of experience resisting the effects of power.

The experiencing-subject is, however, capable of transgressing the limits of their own subjectivity. To paraphrase, Foucault suggested in his later writing that resisting subjectivity was possible by living life like a work of art, by which he meant self-creation on terms other than those arranged by the eventualization of knowledge and power. In the modern episteme, literature demonstrates the ontological significance of language where subjects can exceed the conditions of their own possibility by disappearing into the rhetorical experience of transgression, where language becomes experience. John Searle's description of what he calls the "deontological" foundations of language provides a framework for understanding how subjects are constituted through language acts. The

ontological significance of language acts manifests through subjective integrities, i.e. the expectations, obligations and commitments made to and about self and others that manifest senses of belonging and conditions of trust with respect to the relations between self and society. It is the “abnormal, subjective” production of monadic sincerity and “truth potential” of that which power cannot control, in Habermasian terms; the constitution of self through unity of will and knowledge, in Foucauldian terms. The constitution of subjectivity in this sense manifests through exemplary validities and conceptual ambiguities. I make the case that encountering and transgressing limits of knowledge and altering the conditions of subjectivity, as Foucault suggested, can occur through the pre-cognitive affects of aesthetic experience which include exemplaries and ambiguities, and also senses of belonging and modes of apprehension. I argue further that a framework based on a reinterpretation of Kantian aesthetics helps to explain how subjective resistance can challenge truth and assert legitimacies that reject the conditions of power without being categorized as error, folly or madness.

Journalism’s ontological performances

Michel Foucault’s Genealogical Approach

Michel Foucault’s genealogical approach to the question of knowledge is grounded on the mutually constituting proximity of knowledge and power. In *The Order of Things* Foucault describes what Hayden White calls “epistemic rituals” (White 1973) –

changes in orientation in the collective impulse toward meaning in the Western world (Foucault [1966] 2008). Foucault traces these epistemic shifts through our relationship with language – on the one hand, through the ways in which our rhetorical strategies for creating meaning change and in doing so open new vistas of unknowing and understanding; and on the other, through the ways in which our understanding of the relationship itself between language and “truth” has also changed coincident with changes in rhetorical strategies.

In Foucault’s assessment, up until the 16th century, language in the West had ontological significance – as of divine origins in some cases, and as object among other objects in the natural world to be ciphered and fathomed along with insects, stars, breath, etc. Words did not *represent* things, but were things themselves. In the 17th century, our perception of language shifted to an emphasis on its representative role; language lost its “profound kinship” with the world; understanding (re)oriented towards differences derived from within the systems of symbolic meaning (Foucault [1966] 2008, 47). Understanding was derived through optical measurement and taxonomy: visible form, quantity, distribution in space and magnitude. Beginning in the 19th century, understanding yet again shifted to its modern orientation towards language found in an emphasis on sequence, relation and function in terms of succession. Epistemic verifiability refocused on what was not visible – functions, processes, roles, dynamics – to make sense of what was visible. The modern episteme, according to Foucault, marked “the withdrawal of knowledge and thought outside the space of representation” wherein objective reality took on two distinct epistemological forms: the invisible realities of transcendental objectives and positivism united through the limitations of knowledge grounded in (i.e. Kant’s)

transcendental subject (Foucault [1966] 2008, 263). The recognition of knowledge was fragmented into three differentiated approaches to the use of language: universal logic (science and mathematics); discourse as truth as it formulates itself (formalization through philosophy); and language as experience (literature).

Foucault suggested that these transformations of epistemic criteria unfold through the linguistic and non-linguistic manifestations of “discourse”—the changing social, cultural, economic and intellectual criteria, institutions, practices and events wherein the conditions of possibility for knowledge are considered, established and implemented. Discursive formation regulates what is allowed to circulate as public knowledge and “truth”. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault maps discursive formations in the ways a field or domain of knowledge identifies its objects of relevance, its means and manners of communication, its conceptual terrains and its strategies for encompassing (or excluding) controversy and diffraction ([1969] 2007). It is not an analysis of the textual ends, but rather *a priori* relationships and practices which set the conditions of possibility for knowledge and the rules which regulate visibilities, recognitions and exclusions within and without knowledgeable bounds.

An important implication of the regulation of the visibilities of knowledge is that the rendering of knowledge – its visibility and recognition as such – depends on rendering something else invisible: “Speaking,” as Hayden White puts it, “is a repressive act, identifiable as a specific form of repression by the area of experience that it consigns to silence ... The aim of the ‘archeology of ideas’ is to enter into the interior of any mode of discourse in order to determine the point at which it consigns a certain area of experience to the limbo of things about which one cannot speak” (White 1973, 32). Discursive

formation creates two realms: that which can be known, i.e. knowledge, truth, etc. - and that which cannot be known, what Foucault later called “subjugated knowledges” (Foucault 1980). The criteria and events which generate discourses, and the discourses themselves, are of course rooted in social conditions, social practices, institutional habits, the status of its participants, and social transformations (Kennedy 1979). As a result, the boundary between epistemic visibility and invisibility is a struggle grounded in political and economic relationships.

It is important to point out at this juncture (for reasons that will become apparent) that Foucault does not appear to be a linguistic idealist (Prado 2006). “Truth” is discursively determined, but the category of non-discursive reality tacitly acknowledged in his description of subjugated experiences is never categorically rejected. It is, rather, considered philosophically insignificant (Prado 2006). In the case of madness, for example (Prado 2006, 142):

Foucault is not saying that madness does not exist *as a series of actions*; what he is denying is that behavior is by nature of a piece, manifesting a discerned essence. Quite contrary to this, Foucault is claiming that the behavior-unifying ‘essence’ is an imposition, something deployed in an economy of knowledge. [emphasis in the original]

Foucault acknowledges, for example, that historical discourses select some details over others, and render some objects and processes and subjects visible while a different discourse at a different time could render other objects and processes and subjects visible (Foucault 1997, 297):

There are games of truth in which truth is a construction *and others in which it is not*. One can have, for example, a game of truth that consists of describing things in such and such a way: a person giving an anthropological description of a society supplies not a construction but a description, which itself has a certain number of historically changing rules, so that

one can say that it is to a certain extent a construction with respect to another description. *This does not mean that there's just a void, that everything is a figment of the imagination.* On the basis of what can be said, for example, about this transformation of games of truth – I have been seen as saying that madness does not exist, whereas the problem is absolutely the converse: it was a question of knowing how madness, under the various definitions that have been given, was at a particular time integrated into an institutional field that constituted it as a mental illness occupying a specific place alongside other illnesses. [emphasis added]

To be clear, Foucault rejects a correspondence theory of “truth”, but this in itself does not require the negation of a non-linguistic reality. The importance of this emerges in consideration of subjective resistance from within the discursive confines of domination, a point to which I will shortly return.

Foucault developed his analytical frameworks of archeology and genealogy to inquire into the legitimacy of historical modes of power: a search for empirical links between domination and the contents of knowledge. Knowledge and power point to an analytical front where particular social outcomes/relations are conjoined. By pinpointing how and where knowledge and power are not exterior to the other, “we can grasp what constitutes the acceptability of a system” (2007a, 61).

And from this archeology of knowledge comes the wider consideration of all modes of knowledge, all systems, all epistemes, as contingent which prompts a mode of inquiry into the conditions which made the emergence of a particular explanation possible, perhaps even necessary. It is a search whose resolution must remain necessarily conceptually open because whatever has made the articulation of absolute knowledge possible is grounded in the relationships, choices and behaviors of individuals and groups among which there are “always variable margins of non-certainty” (64). These relationships are in “perpetual slippage from one another” in and along these variegated

planes, a “perpetual mobility” which precludes any kind of totalizing and theoretical closure of understanding (65):

Each interaction can be situated in a context that exceeds it and conversely, however local it may be, each has an effect or possible effect on the interaction to which it belongs and by which it is developed.

The logics of choice in these localized interactions, together with archeological and genealogical processes, account for the *appearance* of something as conceptually stable, but whose disappearance (or at the very least whose conditions of disappearance) can always be envisioned.

There is, then, an unavoidable relationship between the visibility/invisibility of knowledge and the relations of force, or power, at work in the day-to-day eventfulness of social discourse. Relations of power cannot be produced, consolidated or implemented without the accumulation and circulation of discourses which invent, support, and defend them (Foucault 1980, 93):

We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth ... we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we must speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalizes, professionalizes and rewards its pursuit. In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place.

What this suggests are procedures of selection and approval that delimit what kinds of knowledge can freely circulate; it is a condition of some relevance to my earlier questions about journalism’s claims to epistemic legitimacy. There are at work “in every society” overarching procedures of control, selection, organization and distribution of

truth (Foucault 1986, 149). Foucault narrows these to modalities of inclusion/exclusion, on the one hand, and internal modalities of classification, order and distribution on the other (Foucault 1986). Within the categories of inclusion (and within their constitutive frames) and criteria of admittance we find two overarching principles: reason and truth along with their limiting conditions of folly and falseness (Foucault 1986). I am interested in the implications of aesthetic experience on how propositions achieve status to circulate as public knowledge within the procedures and practices of discourse formation.

Lastly, from Foucault's genealogical approach there is a consideration that bares uniquely on the question of epistemic performances within journalism's discourses of "truth". As mentioned, in *The Order of Things*, Foucault describes a shift in the modern episteme towards a separation of rhetoric and knowledge, and the parsing of language into three distinct uses: universal logic (math), philosophy (knowledge) and literature (experience) – a schism rooted in a logocentric suspicion of the persuasive impact of language, but one that acknowledges the continuing ontological significance of language and its capacity to manifest 'being' through literature. Foucault describes literary language acts as a "counter-discourse ...that which compensates for (and not that which confirms) the signifying function of language. Through literature, the being of language shines once more on the frontiers of Western culture ..." (Foucault [1966] 2008, 48-49). Literature according to Foucault emerged as an independent category of language with no other law than that of affirming its own existence, one rooted in a "ludic denial" of the discourse of ideas through "the scandalous, the ugly, the impossible" (327). Literature "leads language back from grammar to the naked power of speech, and there it encounters the untamed, imperious being of words" (327). Literature in this sense for Foucault

is language that gives birth to itself, language that encounters its own limits and comes “undone in the rumbling, in the immediate negation of what it says, in a silence that is not the intimacy of a secret but *a pure outside where words endlessly unravel*” (Foucault 1998a, 152, emphasis added). It is where “language escapes the mode of being of discourse – in other words, the dynasty of representation – and literary speech develops from itself” (Foucault 1998a, 148-9).

Through the epistemic ritual of literature’s rhetorical event, subjects vanish into language as experience rather than representation, and through experience the limitations of discourse can be exceeded. Foucault calls it a “ceremony” (1998b, 95) in which “the eye is mirror and lamp: it discharges its light into the world around it, while in a movement that is not necessarily contradictory, it precipitates this same light into the transparency of its well [i.e. the dark light-absorbing pupil] ... It is the figure of being in the act of transgressing its own limit ” (1998c, 81). Literature is language where the subject can disappear; it is as much about seeing as it is about being seen; the language sees and the language creates; the creator witnesses what it creates, and is the audience; the audience creates what it witnesses, and is the creator.

The language ‘as being’ that according to Foucault can manifest in literature is a demonstration of the possibility for subjects to transgress the conditions of possibility for their own subjectivity. It is the recognition of problematization applied to the subject, and the ability to simultaneously suggest limits and their transgressibility (Simons 1995). ‘Care of the self’ is Foucault’s description of the subject’s encounter with their own transgressible limits of being, opening the possibility for amending the conditions of subjective legitimacy (Foucault 1988; 1997a). The resistant self is constituted through a uni-

ty of will and knowledge, a process of self-examination and self-constitution where truth, and the self, *are constituted through action* (Foucault 2007b, 160). The memories of these resistant “scattered practices” are located in what de Certeau calls the “immense reserve” (1984, 49) of “minor”, ignored, unstratified, unorganized, infinitesimal practices from which “tactics” can be identified. Together these tactics amount to an “antidiscipline” in opposition to the disciplinary force of discourse (1984, xv).

It is important to keep in mind that Foucault’s notion of power reflects relations where “one person tries to control the conduct of another” (Foucault 1997, 292). What this necessitates (i.e. a condition of possibility for power) is the presence of resistance – that which is capable of not being controlled (Foucault 1997, 292):

It should be noted that power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free. If one of them were completely at the other’s disposal and became his thing, an object on which he could wreak boundless and limitless violence, there wouldn’t be any relations of power. Thus, in order for power relations to come into play, there must be at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides. Even when the power relation is completely out of balance, when it can truly be claimed that one side has “total power” over the other, a power can be exercised over the other only insofar as the other still has the option of killing himself, of leaping out the window, or of killing the other person. This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation) there would be no power relations at all.

There is an active role of the experiencing-subject in the production of discursive “truths” including their own subjectivities. The necessary possibility of resistance suggests that in questions of discursive power at some level domination reflects “when people buy into constraints that entrap them in asymmetrical relations that blind them to their real range of possibilities” (Hoy 2005, 82). Subjects are manufactured through relations of power, according to Foucault, through discourse; and they participate in discourse in

whatever form subjectification takes, which means subjects participate in the production of subjectivities including their own, i.e. the subject 'doctor' is constituted by discourse and then behaves like a doctor reinforcing doctor subjectivity. But participation can also be along resistant lines. Resistance is always necessarily present within discourse as that which relations of power want to control. Discourse silences and renders resistance invisible in the form of subjugated knowledges. Subjects are necessarily involved in their own discursive subject-making through language acts that assess what "truths" are legitimate. In the next chapter I argue that self subject-making necessarily manifests power, but it may or may not be on the same terms as power would prefer. I refer the reader to the first quote of my epigraph: power is unavoidable, but domination is variable. I will expand on this topic considerably in the pages to come, but let me say for now that subjects play a role in the discursive production of "truth" including the "truths" of their own subjectivities, be they of a dominated or resistant orientation.

A Discursive Approach to "Truth" in Journalism

With these key points of consideration in mind derived from Foucault's approach to power and knowledge: (i) truth's historical contingencies; (ii) the rational procedures of discursive selection, regulation and constitution of truth rooted in rationality; and (iii) the potential for transgressing the conditions of possibility for subjectivity and knowledge through language acts, I return to the question of "truth" in journalism. I discussed earlier the importance of 'news values' in the production of news truth: individual, organizational and societal preferences and workflows that shape what manifests as news and how.

Key to this discussion is an appreciation for the importance of objectivity and its related

methods of verification. Also as discussed, despite the vigor with which the epistemic legitimacy of objectivity has been advanced and defended, there are compelling arguments suggesting a performative quality to news production — that aspect of what journalism does to obscure epistemic weaknesses through conventions such as genre, framing, assumed facts, the strategic use of quotation, narrative construction, balance (Broersma 2010; Entman 1993; Gitlin 1980; Hackett 1984; Hansen 2004; Jackson 1988; Roeh 1989; Tuchman 1978). These epistemic ‘slights of hand’, if you will, depend on structures for describing truths that transcend the individuals involved and the stories told to the extent that they are expected to (and do to varying degrees) translate from one person to the next as part of the experience of “truth”. This expectation of shared understanding between news-maker and audience manifest in the discursive techniques that journalists use is the foundation of communicability on which journalism is based.

As described, the adoption by professional journalists of objectivity as their truth standard was, according to Stephen Ward, “a rhetorical invention that emerged in response to a new-journalism audience relationship — the journalist as impartial mass informer” (Ward 2004, p. 33). This *relationship* was central to the method, a relationship established through trust; that is, a relationship rooted in establishing trust from mass audiences that what the journalists were telling them was true (Ward 2004). In the composition of the text (in whatever technical format, i.e. print, audio, visual, etc.) there are traces of this consideration – frames, for example. The structures and traces of who an author/creator thinks she is addressing in a cultural context point to a middle ground or horizon where she as news-maker expects the event of understanding to occur (Matheson 2009, 715):

Gadamer imagines the ‘rightness’ of understanding as a momentary fusing of horizons during which the object is allowed to speak to the observer ... Perhaps aspects of good journalism and aspects of a journalistic ideal can be described similarly: something of the truth of public events is heard when the reporter brings an array of facts and voices together for a moment in a way that allows a unity and coherence of meaning to be perceived, yet ready to revise or even contradict that account in the next report.

Beneath the professional challenges of making news-truth is a relationship between language acts and consciousness grounded in the production of social relations and integrity that is foundational to human experience. This relationship, I suggest, is relevant to the antidisciplinary tactics of an aesthetic life and possibilities for self subject-making described by Foucault in his later writings. To help make sense of this (how language acts might overcome the discursive conditions of their own illegitimacy), I turn to the philosophy of language of John Searle, a thinker rarely lumped sympathetically together with Foucault, and yet – as I hope to make clear – one whose philosophy of language and mind are not only *not* ontologically opposed to Foucault’s thinking (although epistemically they are categorically opposed), but whose approach to language helps to make sense of the enigma of the discursively produced subject transgressing their own conditions of possibility through the production of discourse.

Searle argues that the foundations of human meaning and communication are rooted in communicating belief, intention and/or desire in connection with conditions of satisfaction (Searle 2008; 2010). As *symbols*, they are grounded in justifiable linguistic and communicative *expectations* based on what Searle (vis-a-vis Kant) describes as fundamental categories of human cognition such as time, space, causation, etc. the particu-

lars of which need not concern us, other than to appreciate that they give rise to an *expectation* of understanding. Searle believes in a correspondence theory of language (albeit a “trivial” kind of corresponding, according to Prado 2006) where conditions of satisfaction are met in material reality. Foucault argues instead that discourse produces conditions under which truths can circulate; these too suggest conditions of satisfaction, but for which correspondence with material reality is irrelevant. For my purposes, whether meaning is rooted in meeting material or discursive conditions of satisfaction does not matter. What is pertinent to an aesthetic interrogation of journalism is what happens when we use language to make public utterances whose conditions we expect have already been satisfied. We invest language with commitments that Searle calls “deontologies” (from the Greek word for duty): special reasons for *action* such as rights, obligations, responsibilities, authorizations, permissions, and entitlements that at their most basic reflect Searle’s three orientations to perceptions of reality (i.e. belief, intention and desire), but which through layering can and do become much more complex (Searle 2008). (Foucault’s tacit acknowledgement of the importance of action to resistance can be derived from his descriptions of subjugated knowledges as the accumulated experiences of resisting the effects of power (Foucault 1980a), and also his interest in “techniques or technologies of the self” which are “operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in such a way that they transform themselves, modify themselves” (Foucault 2007b, 154)). Discourse reflects collective understanding expressed through language that accumulates deontologic commitments and in

doing so reflects beliefs about what is and is not true: when people assign a function (i.e. make commitments to special reasons for action) to a person or object, they are creating truths through the obligations, rights, responsibilities, duties, entitlements, authorizations, requirements, and so on, invested through the language choices made; friendships, for example, reflect the assignment of particular status functions to a person (Searle 2006; 2010). The political implications of this are immediately apparent. How we relate to one another arises at least in part through the assignment of functions expressed through our linguistic choices. A brief comment in passing from Searle acknowledges this (2008, p. 454):

One sees the role of vocabulary in the activities of revolutionary and reformist movements. They must try to get hold of the vocabulary in order to alter the system of status functions.

What is important for me in Searle's thinking is that communicative sensibility depends in part on obligations, commitments and expectations ("deontologies", in Searle's terminology) attached to words, which in the order of discourse are attached to conditions of "truths". It is through these deontic attributes that power organizes meaning through relationships of domination. And it is through deontologies that experiencing-subjects can organize meaning through relationships of resistance.

Communication research has tended to focus on systems of symbols and their content, but there are important constitutive dynamics at work in the relational dimensions of communicative events (Condit 2005). Wittgenstein's notion of "language games" is useful here for its suggestion that language derives meanings from use and practices, that uses are always learned and engaged in particular contexts, and the particu-

lars of context will suggest conventions of use (Wittgenstein 2009, 185). Language is used differently in different situations — to give orders, to debate, to play sports, storytelling, riddles, etc. and each situation presents a language game with its own rules and expectations. One of language’s essential if not primary functions is arguably in the maintenance of the relationships involved in the circumstances of its use (Canefield 1981, 21; Condit 2005; Stewart 1995; Wittgenstein 2009).

News discourses have their audiences, and the assumptions that journalists have about them will influence the commitments, obligations and expectations expressed within a text. It may in fact be impossible to conceive of persuasion of any kind (including persuasion in the believability of a truth-claim) without taking account of its audiences and their historically and socially contingent predispositions (Charland 1995; Condit 1990; Gross 1999). Texts enable experiences for some and not for others based on shared histories, knowledge and cultural values, or what Condit (1990) calls “invitations to understanding”. Rhetorical failure, for example, often describes the ways in which universal assumptions fall short of the experiential and cultural variation in actual audiences.⁴ In this sense, truth-claims in journalism are a kind of dialectic where the writer anticipates an audience, anticipates that audience’s response and then structures the writing accordingly in that direction.

4 Condit is criticizing the traditional canon of rhetorically great speeches as being more accurately described as invitations to understanding to a particular group of people emerging from commonality of culture, race, grammar, educational dispositions, and ideologies (i.e. a canon largely comprised of speeches by white educated men). It is not a political conspiracy (at least not in every case), but rather a necessary condition of rhetoric’s work and demonstration of how relations of power can be implicated, expressed and created through the use of language.

What makes this imaginary scenario more than just an interesting attribute of writerly technique are the ways in which trust is bound up in these anticipations (Shotter 2009, p. 30):

Being able to talk with those around one with an expectation of, say, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth, and to have one's expectations in large part satisfied, is a part of what it is, as I have already mentioned above, to *trust* those around one. [emphasis in the original]

Beliefs about the audience, about the relationship with the audience, and about how they will respond are embedded in language and communication; they are the contextual expectations of trust within which a particular communication exists. They are *of* the language and yet transcend the specifics of utterance suggesting a dimension of the journalist's task bound in a meta-structure of beliefs, expectations and desires established through the acts of utterance themselves and without which the communication would either be meaningless or would mean something else altogether.

Bruce McKinzie calls this dimension of communication "integrity": the ways in which our expectations about trust in relationships structure and are structured through our use of language (McKinzie 1994). McKinzie found that among authors of letters to a Florida newspaper, "truth" manifested in two irreconcilable ways: (i) truth as contingent, which emerged in discussions about values; and (ii) absolute forms of truth, which emerged in stories about personal histories and experience. McKinzie's respondents, like most of us, unanimously believed that it is possible for people to act truthfully: to say what they mean, to do what they say they will, and to have done what they say they have done; or in other words, they believed it was possible to act with integrity, and these ex-

expectations were “sedimented” in the personal experiences, histories and narratives that shape their individual social understanding. A foundation of integrity is the foundation of social life: “Without this realism and objectivism informing our social expectation, collective life becomes untenable” (McKinzie 1994, p. 119). There is always honour, McKinzie suggests, because even among thieves human existence is social and this involves expectations and obligations of trust. What trust provides — through notions of integrity — is the basis for an expectation of understanding.

The absolute forms of truth “sedimented” in experience and expectations of integrity reflect what Heidegger called a “primordial” relationship with the world (Heidegger 1962, p. 98). Primordial ‘being’ transcends the subject/object divide in that there is no divide between the subject and those elements of the world that are submerged in primordial truth — the example Heidegger uses is an expert carpenter wielding a hammer which is not thought about in the act (quoted in McKinzie 1994, pp. 108-9; Heidegger 1962). When a primordial truth stops working and is thus brought from a state of unconscious assumption to attention, it must then endure a dialectical justification to be reintegrated into understanding (McKinzie 1994). Our desire for integrity — that is, for coherence and consistency with past and current expectations and obligations of trust — is foundation for understanding, and understanding (grounded in notions of trust) is foundation for expectations of understandability. Journalists encounter meaning along the event horizons of expected audiences, and in doing so extemporize their expectations and experiences of social integrity.

In summary, the communicative procedures at work in traditional forms of journalism have embedded in them constituting functions of discursive truth that are generally overlooked by journalists in their application of conventions of verification and veracity, or to say it slightly differently: in the journalistic performance of “truth” there is to be found a constitutional expression of subjective integrity within a dialectics with an expected audience that instantiates expectations, obligations and commitments based on exemplary states of relationality. These elements emerge from conditions of trust at work in creators/authors who organize their integrities in part through the social identities of who they address in their texts and, of course, of themselves. Together, exemplary relationalities and social identities provide a ground of sensibility on which the expectations of understanding and shared meaning necessary for communication are based.

Foucault’s genealogy of knowledge describes discursive procedures that produce historically contingent truths and within which journalism (as the primary form of address making truth-claims to wide publics) operates as a template of sorts for how truths become visible in public culture. One of the epistemic foundations here is an objective mode of apprehension which, as discussed, at least in part, operates to obscure epistemic *aporia*. Meaning is derived in part from the relational conditions at play through expectations of understandability such as frames, conditions of trust and manifestations of integrity. Language acts oriented towards “truth” require authors/creators to manifest subjective integrities through meaning structures in relation to audiences; meaning structures will encounter dominant forms of understanding in Western contexts through frameworks

of rational argumentation and empirical evidence, i.e. they will encounter in the authorial/creative process dominant structures of discursive legitimacy to which authors/creators will agree (in their texts) or resist. The deontic status functions described by Searle have the ontological consequence in language acts of manifesting exemplary elements of subjectivity – expectations, obligations and commitments. These language acts are – or they can be – the literatures of subjective transgression that Foucault described where language transcends its own limitations, where the “eye is mirror and lamp”, where the subject loses itself in language and is constituted in a unity of truth and self through action (Foucault 1998c, 81). Journalism, as a discourse entirely oriented towards “truth”, is engaged in the ongoing ontological enterprise of producing subjectivities, integrities and relationships from within the epistemically stifling confines of discursive legitimacy. Agreement and resistance produce subjectivity (without the possibility of refusal, power ceases to have meaning.) For the most part, at least in terms of mainstream forms of traditional journalism, and in terms of the ongoing production of hegemonic forms of public understanding, it seems that the subjectivities ontologically assembling themselves from within the brambles of truth-oriented language acts readily serve dominant forms of understanding and their legitimacies. But there remain, and there must remain, subjectivities of dissent. How then are resistant orientations able to manifest visibly in culture through the rational legitimacies of domination? The answer, I suggest, is to be found in the subjective legitimacies of aesthetic experience.

On the Habermasian critique: Aesthetics and ambiguity

One of the most substantial critiques leveled against Foucault's genealogical approach is Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action. The main thrust of Habermas' critique is that Foucault's approach inadequately explains certain phenomena: in its inability to distinguish adequately between struggles against power and mechanisms of power; in its failure to adequately explain (and ground theoretically) a preference for struggles against power (what Habermas calls "cryptonormativity"); and in its failure to account for empirical evidence of social organization and those aspects of it that suggest emancipation, cooperation, individuation and self-realization (Habermas [1987] 1995). These failures can be explained or overcome, according to Habermas, with a theory of communicative action which grounds a critique of (instrumental) reason in a linguistic intersubjectivity that roots the ontological foundations of meaning in universal validity claims. It is beyond the scope of this paper to rehash *in toto* the Habermas/Foucault debate; in fact, my interest is in escaping the debate altogether by suggesting at least one point of commonality between the two divergent understandings: both thinkers recognize the unique attributes of aesthetic experience in the realm of meaning-making. It will, however, be helpful to revisit some of the salient points of the debate.

Habermas' critique of reason is grounded on a tripartite understanding of rationality: that there are three domains of rationality at work - instrumental, normative and aesthetic-expressive - each with their own peculiar demands (Habermas 1987). These domains parallel what Habermas describes as the three validity claims of speech: propositional truth (or the objective truth of the proposition spoken), normative rightness (the speaker's moral authority to make the proposition), and authenticity of intent (that what is

said is the same as what is meant). In the Habermasian framework, these validity claims are the conditions that make possible communication, a prelinguistic consensus of what determines communicative validity. Habermas argues that by ignoring the role of language and its intersubjective foundation for creation of the subject, the critique of reason that has dominated Western philosophy since Kant has in fact been a critique of instrumental reason; or rather, of a society deformed by over-reliance on instrumental reason as the only or primary grounds for knowledge. Rather than reject reason altogether, Habermas' theory of communicative action attempts to resuscitate it through the realm of everyday living, what he calls the lifeworld, where instrumental, normative and aesthetic-expressive rationality are unified in everyday communicative acts. Communicative action in the lifeworld explains how aspects of modernization lead, not only to subjugation, but also emancipation and it provides a ground for truth *contra* Foucault's radical contingency in the rational consensus concerning the validity claims of communication. Habermas posits a transcendental consensus and rational intersubjectivity to replace Kant's transcendental intuitions and rational subjectivity.

A criticism of Habermas' theory of communicative action has to do with his conception of aesthetic-expressive rationality and how the authenticity of the 'logic' of subjective experience is determined. In the Habermasian framework, aesthetic experience is recognized as a distinct realm of socialization, but one whose operability must occur through communicative action, i.e. aesthetic-expressive rationality depends on linguistification for legitimacy (Duvenage 2003). And at that, it is the pragmatic rather than literary functions of language that are valorized in the validity of communication. Habermas distinguishes between normal and abnormal language uses, the former serving social in-

tegration and rational understanding, the latter serving the former as a “parasitic” category of literary resources. It is a distinction based on an appreciation of distinguishable language practices in the outer world (normal, public) through which meaning is determined through communication, and an inner world (abnormal, subjective), through which a monadic sincerity is established. In this framework, aesthetic experience is isolated from intersubjective production of shared meaning. It *can* play a role in the rational-discursive production of meaning but only after it has entered language and can therefore influence cognitive meanings and normative expectations (Duvenage 2003).

Significantly, Habermas admits that there is a distinction to be drawn between the linguistification of the aesthetic experience and the experience itself. He writes (Habermas [1984] 2000, 279):

Authentic experiences of this type are possible only to the extent that the categories of the patterned expectations of organized daily experience collapse, that the routines of daily action and conventions of ordinary life are destroyed, and the normality of foreseeable and accountable certainties are suspended.

Aesthetic experience is the experience of the “decentering and unbounding of subjectivity”, an experience that at least on its surface resembles Foucault’s challenge to subjectivity’s transcendent stability (Habermas [1984] 2000, 279). Aesthetic experience according to Habermas increases sensitivity to what has not already been cognitively organized; it allows the opportunity for the experience of the new which depends for its legibility on an absence of conceptual closure. To the extent that aesthetic experience is incorporated into life histories, he continues, it enters into language and belongs to everyday communicative practice through which “it reaches into our cognitive interpretations and normative expectations and transforms the totality in which these moments are related to each

other” ([1984] 2000, 280). But for Habermas the experience itself resides outside of this communicative context ([1984] 2000, 281):

The aesthetic ‘validity’ or ‘unity’ that we attribute to a work refers to its singularly illuminating power to open our eyes to what is seemingly familiar, to disclose anew an apparently familiar reality. This validity claim admittedly stands for a *potential* for ‘truth’ that can be released only in the whole complexity of life-experience; therefore this truth potential may not be connected to (or even identified with) one of the three validity claims constitutive for communicative action, as I have been previously inclined to maintain. The one-to-one relationship which exists between the prescriptive validity of a norm and the normative validity claims raised in regulative speech acts *is not a proper model for the relation between the potential for truth in works of art and the transformed relations between self and world aesthetic experience.* [emphasis added]

This grounding of aesthetic experience in indeterminacy — what Habermas calls a *truth potential* — is one of the ways we can wend our way between the seemingly irreconcilable tension between Foucault’s genealogical pre-constitution of the subject and Habermas’ universal foundation for intersubjective truth. For both, the realm of the aesthetic opens into an undetermined territory of experience. In its prelinguistic state, aesthetic experience offers the opportunity for new kinds of experience to emerge by defying or remaining outside of, on the one hand, rationality’s needs for pre-agreed upon validity claims, and on the other its self-generating strategies for determining conditions of possibility and the ways and means for subjugated experiences to emerge into the realm of knowledge.

Returning, for a moment, to Habermas’ critique of genealogy as cryptonormative, one of the most troublesome implications of ‘will to truth’ as foundation for knowledge is the difficulty of ethical judgment. Near the end of his life, Foucault began to speak about an ethics of the self – an aesthetic life, comparing an ethical life to a work of art:

“[C]ouldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art?” (Foucault 1984a, 350). In this sense, the self is self-generated, where “at every moment, step by step, one must confront what one is thinking and saying with what one is doing, with what one is” (Foucault 1984b, 374). It is self-review and self-making with a sense of “truth”: not defined by correspondence to reality, but rather (i) “as a force inherent to principles and which has to be developed in a discourse”; (ii) not hermeneutical, but rather “something which is in front of the individual as a point of attraction, a kind of magnetic force that attracts him towards a goal” ; (iii) reached by rhetorical explanation of what is the good life rather than through analysis of what is real; (iv) that emerges from the desire to constitute the self rather than discover it (Foucault 2007b, 163-4).

The self that Foucault describes exists only in aspiration as exemplar – an identity of future contingency that is created through an artistic undertaking of beauty, propriety and form (Ferguson 1999). The aesthetic self is a perpetually incomplete project of plurality, a *strategy* rather than prescription, a “style of existence” that resists preconditions of possibility in the way that style and form resists narrative determination (Ferguson 1999, 130). Significantly, a narrative requires closure in the sense that there must be a beginning and end in order to transform “the welter of facts that is historical reality” into meaning (Stone-Mediatore 2003, 30). Actions never end in the world in the sense that they continue in perpetuity through reactions which generate more actions, etc. Ascribing meaning to experience necessarily involves choosing endings which link together actions in meaningful ways (Arendt 1958; Stone-Mediatore 2003). Foucault’s aesthetic self remains perpetually in the future as exemplar and as such without a determined end, without a defined narrative, *but with possibility for action* in the present arrived at

through rhetorical consideration of past experience and future goals. The aesthetic individual creates spaces of resistance and dissensus by acknowledging *contradictions* which define the limits of a discourse and on which its emergence depends, through experiencing the possibility of displacing and reversing existing power relations, through *reflexive/inventive* moments of considering existing relations of power and their reversibility, and through the provocation of existing relations into uncertainty and incoherence (Phillips 2002). (In chapter 3, I explore the aesthetics of dissensus and resistance in much greater detail).

Habermas' aesthetic-expressive experience is conceptually ungovernable in its pre-linguistic state and remains independent of the validity claims on which he argues meaning depends. For Foucault, aesthetic existence is achieved through technologies of the self wherein knowledge is determined through self-constituting encounters with and reflexive responses to the conditions of possibility for knowledge including the subject itself. In both cases, aesthetic experience is put forward as a mode for encountering the limitations of knowledge: on the one hand, the Habermasian left, the threshold between consensus (in the life world) and the destructive potential of a world dominated by instrumental reason; on the other, the Foucauldian right, the threshold between liberation and the technologies of coercion which manifest and shape the conditions of possibility for knowing. Aesthetic experience manifests somewhere between the conditions of domination and truth.

Between power and knowledge: An aesthetic framework

The categories of social identity and exemplary validities described above express relational aspects of truth-claims that are difficult to account for in purely empirical terms, i.e. it isn't at all clear how you verify a sense of belonging, or the experience of ambiguity, or integrity. These reflect sensibilities that influence understanding through pre-cognitive and non-rational states such as emotion, affect, identity, obligation, etc. I would like to situate these aspects of communication into a larger aesthetic framework based on a reinterpretation of Kantian aesthetics that helps to explain how non-rational attributes of communication influence relations of power and the discursive production of truth.

'Aesthetics' is an admittedly contested and "deeply ambiguous" term (Shusterman 2006). And while this is not the place to rehearse the variegated history of aesthetic philosophy, there are a few important clarifications to be made before embarking on a more detailed consideration of an aesthetic approach to discursive "truth".

One of the key distinctions to be made for present purposes is between aesthetic experience, emotion and affect. Following the work of Brian Massumi, 'affect' — which is different than emotion — describes the physiological "noise" of potential and "intensity" produced most immediately in the experience of perception that arises but remains outside of linguistic and cognitive feedback loops (Massumi 2002, 25). Emotion, for example, according to Massumi is affect's first positioning and limitation within cognitive structures. Affect on the other hand taps into immanent self-organizing impulses that precede (apparently, by about half a second) "positioning oneself in a line of narrative continuity" with language, logic, reason, etc. (Massumi 2002, 25). It is the delocalized autonomic responses to the impingement of cultural encounter — the contraction of po-

tential interactions before understanding and then expression unfolds in three-dimensional space (Massumi 2002). I propose aesthetic experience as a way to help to explain how architectures of meaning, memory, and identity give rise to the autonomous physiological attributes of affect such as changing frequencies of galvanic skin response, heart rates, body temperature and breathing. Affect describes responses outside of the regulating influences of cognitive understanding (Massumi 2002), and yet which necessarily arise from within contexts of memory, meaning and identity (for example, what exacerbates one gallery patron's shock might just as readily be considered banal by another). Aesthetic experience as intended here is comprised of affect in Massumi's sense of the word, but accounts for it from within the grounds of identity, memory and meaning from which the affective potentials (in the form of autonomic responses) emerge.

There is also an important distinction to be made between aesthetic *analysis* and aesthetic *experience* (Fenner 2003). The former describes an approach to understanding expression — a mode of apprehension — that focuses on formal sensory attributes and that decontextualizes cultural expression to engage in formal analysis of aesthetic attributes. This is aesthetics as an analytic approach; for example, in connection with the fine arts. Fenner's larger point is to argue against this overly reductive understanding of aesthetics. Our most immediate aesthetic responses, he argues — and I agree — arise from associations involving memory, meaning, and understanding, qualities that in turn are responsive to social, moral and taste contexts (Fenner 2003). Aesthetic experience meant in this way describes the complexities of experience in excess of the conceptual and yet in relation to contextualizing influences.

Having narrowed my use of the term “aesthetics”, I want to now turn to the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant whose *Critique of Judgment* ([1793] 2001) is still considered among the most comprehensive attempts to articulate a philosophy of aesthetics and the limits of knowledge through judgment. Kant claimed in the *Critique of Pure Reason* ([1781] 2003) that knowledge arises through the experience of sensory perception organized through *a priori* structures of mind, including attribution to a unified consciousness and fundamental categories meaning including time, space and causality. He identified three faculties of mind: *knowledge*, which described both empirical and transcendental phenomena arising in the perception and apprehension of the mechanical functioning of nature (in accordance with the rules of time, space and causality); *morality*, which described human agency that exists both of this world and yet operates independent of its mechanical rules through the power of reason; and finally, *judgment*, which describes the faculty for experiencing the mechanical world of nature united with the capacity for rational freedom in the encounter with beauty (Huges 2010). Through judgment (i.e. aesthetic experience) we are able to translate the conditions of possibility for knowing into freedom (Kant [1793] 2001, 278-9).

Kant proposed three subjective sources of knowledge: sense, imagination and apperception, that together are responsible in succession for transforming experience (of nature, of the world) into meaning ([1781] 2003). Each has empirical and transcendental elements. *Sense*, which is the faculty that perceives empirical qualities (appearances) in the world, also has the *a priori* (in the sense of before engagement with the empirical) pure intuition of space and time. These *a priori* intuitions structure perception in that we only perceive what has space and time qualities, what has quantity, what makes an im-

pression on our senses. *Apperception* on the empirical level involves conscious recognition of a self that experiences. But before any meaningful encounter with the empirical, there must be a unified consciousness (that is, the unity which binds all new experiences together). There can only be the possibility of perception if there is a unified consciousness, what Kant calls the transcendental unity of apperception. The faculty of *Imagination* involves (recognizing, producing, comparing) reproductions of the empirical world and associations within it. But it is through the pure synthesis of imagination that the transcendental unity of apperception is made possible. Restated, within the Kantian framework there are *a priori* (transcendental) elements at work in the production of knowledge: pure intuitions, the pure synthesis of imagination, and the pure apperception of self as the first condition that makes experience possible. And there are empirical elements at work: the apperceptive awareness of a unified consciousness of self, sense perception, and the imagination (working sensory input into patterns of reproduction and association).

Kant argued that knowledge arises through the synthesis of experience and reason, and that this synthesis takes place through a succession of events: the raw experience of the senses through the faculties of intuition, the attribution of meaning to sensory experience through the faculty of imagination; and the ordering of meaning into concepts through the faculty of understanding. Ontologically, then, knowledge emerges from the ways in which the experience of encountering the world are organized through pre-existing cognitive structures and principles. Kant calls these pre-existing elements of mind *a priori* intuitions and categories – the rendering of experience in terms of time and space, and fundamental concepts (such as quality, quantity, relation, substance, etc.) that

ground all elements of possible knowledge.⁵ What makes aesthetic experience possible for Kant is that there is a direct correspondence between the *a priori* intuitions and nature, i.e. that time and space are the ordering structures of both, and the pleasure of this correspondence is what lies at the heart of the experience of beauty ([1793 2001]).

This is a digression, but worth describing even in such sketched brevity to provide contextual explanation for the four moments that Kant proposes must inure in order for the experience of beauty to manifest. For my purposes, and without the means or inclination to assess Kant's speculations in empirical terms, the four moments of aesthetic experience appear to also describe categories of experience, as I will explain. I am not adopting Kant's theory of beauty, but rather am tactically "poaching" from his framework (in the sense meant by de Certeau, as an appropriation and "mutation [that] makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment" (2004, xxi)), a model for making sense of aesthetic experience in the context of the production of discursive truth (de Certeau 1984, 165-176). Kant proposed that aesthetic judgment arises in the event of four "moments": (1) a disinterested form of pleasure, (2) grounded in the absence of conceptual closure, (3) with an awareness of the universal capacity for such pleasure, and (4) a feeling of necessity grounded in the *expectation* that everyone *ought* to share in the pleasure (Huges 2006; 2010; Kant [1793] 2007, §20-22; Wenzel 2005). These moments, I suggest, can be reinterpreted as a way of categorizing attributes of aesthetic experience and together they offer a practical framework for understanding how non-rational attributes of truth-claims can be used to mobilize relations of power in both relational and representational terms. To be clear, *unlike* Kant's model, as categories of attribution these are not "mo-

5 The *a priori* categories of fundamental concepts are quality, quantity, relation and substance as mentioned, and various modalities including (i) reality, negation, limitation; (ii) unity, plurality, totality;

ments” which must *all* be in play in order for aesthetic experience to occur. Rather, I am using them to characterize certain kinds of experience that arise in the production of discursive truth as aesthetic.

Restated then (from Kant), the first moment references a disinterested mode of apprehension, arguably one of the most controversial of the claims because of how “disinterest” can be used politically. For Kant, disinterest describes a satisfying encounter with an object independent of the object’s conformity to some external concept, for example, its function or utilitarian value, an intellectual precept, its moral propriety, etc. (Kant [1793] 2007, Part 1, §2; Wenzel 2005). Pierre Bourdieu saw in Kant’s disinterested mode procedures of class “distinction” that privileged an ability to ignore and withdraw from economic realities (Bourdieu 1984). He likened it to maintaining a “child’s relation to the world” that responds to surfaces and ignores political context (Bourdieu 1984, 54). Bourdieu’s sociological critique of Kant reveals the limitations of Kant’s universal interpretation of human experience, what Bourdieu labeled as “nothing less than the monopoly of humanity” (491).

But even accepting this critique, there remains the aesthetic experience itself, i.e. the extra-rational and pre-linguistic dimensions of communication and cultural experience that remain meaningful. As such, a disinterested mode of apprehension can also be understood as an orientation to understanding, what Jonathon Loesberg calls “symbolic embodiment”: a mental construct which assumes absolute independence from the bases of the object observed, its causes or intended purposes. “... [S]ymbolic embodiment does not describe the real features of artworks; it describes how we interpret an object when we construe it as artwork” (Loesberg 2005, 7). Even sociological critiques of aes-

(iii) substance, causality, reciprocity; and (iv) possibility, existence, necessity.

thetic experience like Bourdieu's do not address the quality of aesthetic experience that categorically resists coercion in the sense that the experience of beauty cannot be forced, (or, for that matter, rationally produced), just as emotional states can not be forced upon someone (nor rationally produced). Our intuitive, affective, emotional, immediate, pre-linguistic and embodied responses manifest independent of coercion, although — as Bourdieu argued — the responses themselves can be put to political use. Loesberg convincingly argues that Bourdieu himself engages in an aesthetic mode of analysis in his notion of *habitus*, his disinterested approach to fieldwork. By reading the field in terms of its surface indicators and seeking insight in their rearrangement rather than through some kind of hermeneutics, Loesberg argues that Bourdieu's *habitus* depends on a disinterested mode of apprehension that severs all ties between subject and object, and allows for the perception of object as existing for its own sake (Loesberg 2005).

Paradoxically, recognition of disinterest as a *mode* of apprehension makes it possible to also consider its opposite mode of apprehension that deracinates the distance between subject and object altogether. Aesthetics as the elimination of subject/object duality suggests a domain of experience where there is one event horizon rather than two. For example, John Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics are grounded on the union of organism and environment "to institute an experience in which the two are so fully integrated that each disappears" (quoted in Jay 2003, 20). Dewey's "esthetic" experience is a transformative 'in-between' the art work and the audience: "There is no experience in which the human contribution is not a factor in determining what actually happens. The organism is a force, not a transparency" ([1934] 2005, 256; see also Cuick 2004). Aesthetic experience, for Dewey, offers the possibility for the reunion of human animal (subject) and en-

vironment (object) through the knowledge of experience (Shusterman 2005). In similar fashion, Nicolas Bourriaud suggests an aesthetic understanding that “takes as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interaction and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space” (Bourriaud 2002, 14). Bourriaud’s “relational aesthetics” describes artwork understood as “an ensemble of units to be re-activated by the beholder-manipulator ... The contemporary artwork’s form is spreading out from its material form: it is a linking element, a principle of dynamic agglutination. An artwork is a dot on a line,” (20-21). The work that art does lies in the encounter of audience with artwork. Grant Kester suggests a “dialogical” understanding of aesthetics, at least as manifests in the artwork of politically engaged artists, an experience grounded once again in a confusion of subject and object (Kester 2004). Starting with a Habermasian notion of intersubjectivity, Kester draws on feminist critiques of Habermas to develop an aesthetic epistemology rooted in contextual appreciation and empathetic identification. The former considers (objective) understanding only from within the (subjective) histories of who makes the utterances, and the latter grounds (objective) understanding in capacities to (subjectively) identify with authors/speakers. The dialogical aesthetic witnesses the necessary transcending of subject/object divides in artistic encounters (Kester 2004).

Relational and dialogic aesthetics are approaches to aesthetic experience anticipated by Hans Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (1975). Gadamer proposed that art be understood as the simultaneous events of expression (object) and reception (subject), which cannot be compared independently, and which emerge on a fused event horizon (Gadamer 1975; Vattimo 2008).

A disinterested mode of apprehension *emphasizes* the distinction between subject and object, a distance imagined to its extreme limit; and the *elimination* of the gap between subject and object emphasizes the intersubjective foundation of experience. It is a paradox, but it is not incomprehensible. On the one hand, the aesthetic mode grounds its critique in a self-reflexivity that measures possibility *against* the preconditions of knowing: what is it possible to know without preconditions? On the other hand, it is a mode grounded in loss of subjectivity altogether (*and objectivity*) and privileging of a co-relational alternative. The one is dependent on the possibility of the other: there must be a space of dissension and the possibility of reversibility and rearrangement in order for an alternative to emerge (in the same way that freedom is the condition of possibility for power).

To put this in more practical terms, the other than rational and yet still meaningful category of a disinterested mode of apprehension has contemporary allegiances within discourses of traditional journalism, science and jurisprudence, among others. Objectivity, positivity and justice trade in speculation of the possibility of subject and object severability. Within contemporary art discourses meaning is understood as emerging through the elimination of subject and object through performance, encounter and relation, and there are new and emerging forms of commentary on social reality that paradoxically encompass both modes simultaneously. For example, participatory forms of journalism (i.e. alternative media who report from within communities whose events also comprise objects of reportage) like *The Dominion* often strive to replicate traditional methods of verification that rely on objective forms of truth, but they do this by structurally conflating subject/object categories through conventions of reporters writing about

themselves and their own communities, a gesture that eliminates what Keven Howley calls the “convenient gap” between news producer and audience (Howley 2005). Disinterest in this sense is a structure for understanding adopted by some news producers and understood as a structure of understanding by their audiences. It is a mode of apprehension altogether different from that brought to bear on a theater performance, a conundrum made even more apparent by imagining theatrical expectations of knowing brought to bare on a scientific report. The sensibilities would be scrambled — perhaps, not without some interesting outcomes — but their hoped for meanings and territories of sensibility would for the most part be hopelessly disordered.

Gadamer also employed the metaphor of 'play' in describing aesthetic experience, yet another way of thinking about how modes of apprehension can influence understanding (1975). In the way that a player playing a game plays *something*, and that she does so necessarily voluntary and improvisationally (one cannot be forced to truly play, only to behave; and to truly play is to engage without pre-determined ends), aesthetic experience describes an engagement grounded in agency, action and uncertainty. It is a mode of apprehension that, like play, has no end other than itself, and which by definition cannot be coerced. It is a distribution of sensibility that adheres “to a sensorium different to that of domination”: play’s freedom contrasted to work’s servitude; appearances freed from reality (Ranci re 2009, 30). “What aesthetic free appearance and free play challenge is the distribution of the sensible that sees in the order of domination a difference between two humanities” (Ibid.). The aesthetic as a mode of apprehension as play provides, in a sense, a structure for indeterminacy, or perhaps more fitting: the conditions of possibility for achieving underdetermined futures without domination.

Feminist scholars have also strived to illuminate relations of power that systematically and strategically ignore attributes of knowledge that are both objective and subjective — for example, the way we know people and how our knowledge of them is both necessarily incomplete, even though we still know them, and also necessarily dependent on who the knower is (or in other words, that objective qualities of reality can be open to social structuring depending on who is experiencing them, Code 1991).⁶

The aesthetic alters the conditions of possibility for power without giving up legibility. In this sense, the aesthetic is a mode of creation – of arrangement and rearrangement – that invites the annihilation of power, or in Rancière’s words, the annihilation of differences between humanities. What forms, we might ask, do the limits of legibility take in public practices of truth-telling? What proximities and temporalities defend the conditions of power? Journalism presents one widely appreciated distribution of sensibility and legitimacy grounded in particular relations of power. What distributions might reverse these relations and, in Rancière’s estimation, ‘annihilate’ the divisions between the humanities of the powerful and those that fulfill their expectations?

These paradoxical qualities of contrary modes of apprehension touch on a more encompassing representational category of aesthetic experience, one derived from Kant’s second moment: conceptual indeterminacy, or ambiguity, derived from freeplay of the faculties of imagination and understanding (Kant [1793] 2007, §9). The pleasure of beauty for Kant is an experience grounded in part in the pleasurable enigma of ‘purposiveness without purpose’, an apperception of nature - which has no purpose - as having purpose that coincides, at least in its fundamental structures, with our own. As Fiona Huges puts it (2010, 23):

...something beautiful pleases us because of the fit or purposiveness between a particular object and our mental response and this singular instance opens up the possibility that nature in general may also be accessible to the ordering activity of our minds.

Whether or not the links between categories of mind and universe can be established at the root of aesthetic experience, we can observe that aesthetic qualities are cognitively recognizable and yet remain conceptually indeterminate, i.e. aesthetic experiences cannot be proved the way, for instance, a mathematical equation can be proved. Aesthetic experience defies the indexing, ordering and categorizing activities of cognition through non-conceptual, non-rational, affective and emotional qualities of meaningfulness. Methods of understanding are as much concerned with limiting ambiguity as they are with clarifying “reality”. Objectivity, in this sense, and traditional methods of journalism, are ways of *reducing* ambiguity so as to present “truth” in knowable fragments (Cramerotti 2009).

The deep ambiguities at work in aesthetic experience are also apparent in Kant’s third moment: the necessary shareability of aesthetic experience – the *ought* of an encounter with beauty and what Kant described as an awareness that everyone can recognize beauty and in the right circumstances *ought* to experience it. The third moment manifests within awareness of the universal capacity for aesthetic pleasure. In Kant’s terms, we encounter in beauty the “hidden presupposition of our empirical judgments” reflected in the ordering structure of the universe; their universality suggests that beauty ought to be experienced by anyone who encounters the same conditions (Huges 2006, 562). The expectation of communicability and meaning is comparable to the trust conditions necessary for the linguistic integrities described in the previous section. Kant’s universal is

grounded in part on the *a priori* intuitions that organize fundamental categories of knowing (i.e. categories of meaning without which there can be no experience: time, space, causality, quality, quantity, modality and relation). But what is at stake, here, is the necessity of communicability — an *expectation* of communicability that grounds aesthetic experience in the *possibility* of shared sensibility. This is an orientation of affect (in Massumi's sense of the term) that comes from within structures of both past experience and future expectation of common sense. What this does in part is relocate conceptual certainty into future and therefore indeterminate terms while allowing for the constitution of communicative relationality through commitments, obligations and expectations as previously described. Exemplary conditions precipitate integrities which manifest through communication.

As future-states, exemplary validities are able to confound the effects of power intent on mobilizing relations in its own interest with the goal of “guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome” (Foucault 1982, 789). Or in other words, to the extent that power operates by limiting and ordering future outcomes, exemplary conditions other than those reflected within fiat of power suggest possibilities for resistance. Aesthetic experience’s ambiguous and exemplary sensibilities resist relations of domination to the extent that the latter rely on the conceptual certainties of what is “true” now and in the future.

Which is not to deny, of course, the worst manifestations of politics and aesthetics. As Walter Benjamin pointed out, aestheticized politics can be the logical outcome of fascism — a politics of seductive spectacle engendered through the use of symbols, myths, and rites rather than reason and which can transform even human suffering into decontext-

tualized forms of aesthetic pleasure (Benjamin [1936] 1968; Jay 2003). The manifestations of aestheticized politics (in Nazi Germany, fascist Italy and communist Russia, for example) have significantly undermined utopic expectations for the alchemy of radical politics and aesthetics. But as Jacques Rancière and others have assessed, a “post-utopic” interest in the emancipatory potential of art (albeit divorced from radical politics *per se*) has persisted under the rubric of the avant-garde (Kester 2004; Rancière 2004). Rancière describes both *strategic* gestures in the art world that reflect political intelligence in the sense of military-strategic, i.e. shock value, outrage, rupture, and *future oriented* gestures which attempt to present preferred and unprecedented relations for public consideration (Rancière 2004, 29; 2008). In the latter, conceptual stability is rerouted to some future undetermined condition — in a sense, an ambiguous exemplary rooted in modes of participation and playfulness. Krystof Ziarek (2002; 2008) argues that avant-garde aesthetics do not resist the effects of power, but rather deny them and constitute a time and space configuration without power as its grounding orientation. Ziarek’s argument is that the avant-garde rearranges the conditions of possibility of ‘being’. Art’s most radical potential instantiates a ground of ‘being’ *before* power, an opening of relations before their differentiation into power and powerless, creating rupture and the possibility for radically unprecedented relations (139). Aesthetic experience — its indeterminacy — can alter the conditions of possibility for the object of power itself.

Jean-Francois Lyotard apparently found in elements of Kant’s aesthetics the idea that affect manifests outside the bounds of domination (Gearhardt 1999). “[I]t is in his [Lyotard’s] reading of the *Second Critique* that the connection between feeling and freedom emerges clearly – when Lyotard stresses that the sense of obligation is a feeling, and

that that feeling is for Kant the sign of human freedom” (Gearhardt 1999, 104-5). The link between feeling and obligation is important. Within the bonds of social expectation, obligation and commitment manifest within truth-claims and bound up within notions of integrity, identity and trust, there is at work an affective dimension of experience, including emotion but also in Massumi’s wider sense of pre-linguistic, pre-cognitive responses that emerge from and merge with the localizing structures of reason, memory and meaning. Lyotard was trying to understand colonial reality in Algeria and its subsequent and seemingly sudden rupture through violent revolution in 1954. Lyotard believed that such sudden upheaval pointed to a social condition constituted by emotion: just as the emotional bonds of colonial reality “on some level [were] freely made” by Algerians, “the links connecting them with that society could be broken freely and virtually overnight” (104). No one can be forced to *feel* an obligation to society or in any other way. Aesthetic experience recognizes the possibility of meaning independent of domination.

Foucault’s suggestion that we must “create ourselves as a work of art” in order to transcend the conditions of possibility for our own subjectivities is an aspirational ethics, one rooted in future indetermination rather than past prescription, a sense of creation rather than discovery (Foucault 1984a, p. 351). Foucault’s path to freedom — or at least the possibility of transcending conditions of possibility for subjectivity — lay in self-review and self-making with a sense of “truth” not defined by correspondence to reality, but rather as described earlier as an exemplary condition towards which a unity of self and action manifests (Foucault 2007b, 163-4). The aesthetic self is a perpetually incomplete project of plurality, a strategy rather than prescription, a “style of existence” that resists preconditions of possibility (Ferguson 1999, 130).

And finally, from Kant's fourth moment, we get the idea of *sensus communis*, the presupposition of common sense on which the exemplary conditions of beauty (the *ought* of beauty) are based (Kant [1793] 2007, §20-22). The *sensus communis* reflects in Kant's terms shared structures of cognition and "the ability to coordinate our mental faculties as is required for any cognition whatsoever. The communicability of an object-judgment is due, at least in part, to the existence of a state-of-affairs available to all of us" (Huges 2010, 71). Kant's universal necessity need not concern us. What is significant here is the relevance to aesthetic experience of common sense, which also describes a sense of belonging within shared experiences and understanding. *Sensus communis* describes common sensibilities into which we subjugate individual identities within the structures of integrity that regulate our relationships with society. Kennan Ferguson describes "aesthetic identity" as the shared sensibilities, values and preferences with which we manifest feelings of belonging and their obverse, feelings of exclusion (Ferguson 1999). "We do not, in other words, make judgments; judgments make us," Ferguson writes, and through them we constitute human society (Ferguson 1999, 13). What Kant proposed as a universal category of aesthetic moral agreement can more sensibly be recognized as an historical circumstance of shared values, preferences, orientations through which aspects of social identity and a sense of belonging are established. Who we think we are, and who we think we are communicating with, as discussed in the previous section, is of central importance in making sense of ourselves and the world.

As described at the outset of this chapter, journalism demonstrates a form of genealogical near-sightedness – an unwillingness to reflexively examine the implications of its orientation towards "truth" for the organization of power. Language acts in this con-

text instantiate elements of 'being' through subjectivities and relationships that both reflect existing relations of power and create them. And at other times resist them through the "literatures" of transgression. The overarching terms for determining discursive legitimacy, at least in Western contexts, is rationality, but the deontic foundations of language resist rational justification, instead laying their foundations in an orientation of exemplary action and identities. The sensibilities of "literature" as Foucault identifies and in this sense are conceptually ambiguous and decentering for subjectivities.

My approach to aesthetics takes as its starting orientation Kant's aesthetic moments (of beauty). Together they suggest categories of aesthetic experience that reflect the sensibilities of literatures of transgression: social identity, ambiguity, exemplary meaningfulness and paradoxical modes of apprehension.

Aesthetic experience, unlike knowledge, is rooted in the conceptually indeterminate — in excess of rationality, where affect encounters but is not yet positioned into the narratives and logics of understanding. Affect emerges from within memories, experiences, expectations, identities, and contexts that offer the promise of meaning — a feeling that *ought* to be sharable and a capacity for judgment that presupposes the possibility of common sense. Even if consensus, as Foucault suggests, is empirically unachievable (Foucault 1984b, 379), the expectation of common sense is a condition of possibility for language. Aesthetic experience, as (re)distribution of sensibility, can create possibilities for unprecedented world space and futures that only instantiate where meaning is voluntarily engaged (like play), an arrangement of relations whose sensibility depends on the absence of domination and conceptual closure and understanding lie off in the future. Aesthetic experience encompasses paradoxical modes of apprehension that regulate how

the dynamic between subject and object — audience and performance, public and art, citizen and news — unfolds. On the one hand, it suggests a self-reflexive concern with a rearrangement of elements rather than their causes and purposes. It is, to overstate it, an anti-hermeneutical approach grounded in the idea of disinterest. On the other hand, a disinterested mode of observation like that which grounds the legitimacy of traditional journalism is rooted in speculation about the possibility of reversibility — of absolute unrelatedness between subject and object, but also necessarily in the reversibility of relations of power. To the extent that power needs to predetermine outcomes of conduct, aesthetic experiences appear to describe categories of meaningfulness through which the expectations of power, including its truths, can be disordered.

CHAPTER 3 – Discursive Legitimacy

Up to this point, I have identified epistemic instability and overlooked ontologically significant aspects of journalism, and I have made the case that aesthetic experience helps to explain their discursive significance through the dynamics of identity, conceptual ambiguity, modes of apprehension and exemplary validities. I turn now to the question of the role of the experiencing-subject in the production of discursive truth.

The necessity of resistance within the milieux from which relationships of power take shape grounds the mechanisms of discourse in the actions of the experiencing-subject who in encounter with the conditions of what they *must* be (according to discursive authority) and their own structures of memory, identity and understanding, then act to manifest or resist the conditions of their own subjectivity. In a culturally productive context, authors create texts and through them must navigate these complexities of power manifest in communicative terms. The journalistic context is so important, here, because of its wide public address. Journalism expects mass audiences and because of their breadth will bring into play (perceived) hegemonic meanings. In order to guide understanding towards particular event horizons, journalism must address dominant forms of public understanding, and they must bridge them with their own subjective integrities. Language acts demand this of participants through, at the very least, the exemplary validities inherent in expectations of shared sensibility, which is a condition of possibility for language. Also in play will be the senses of belonging being derived from expectations of shared sensibility, the structures of understanding expected to transcend the conditions of subjectivity, (i.e. modes of apprehension such as genre, frames, etc.) and the

regulation of conceptual indeterminacy. The journalist's goal is to navigate this discursive domain so as to avoid having the text relegated to categories of mistake, error, irrelevance, folly, madness or irrationality – qualities that would disqualify meanings from circulating discursively as knowledge.

More specifically, my interest in the subject's self-constituting potentials is genealogical and tactical, by which I mean there are communicative techniques outside of the territories of power that are tactically significant in the struggle for meaning and legitimacy. Tactics in this sense are “a calculus which cannot count on ‘proper’ (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality” (de Certeau 1984, xix). Tactics are how “the other” makes forays into power; a fragmentary, disaggregated, opportunistic challenge that “poaches”, “creates surprises”, and generally upsets in disaggregated fashion the conditions of domination (de Certeau 1984). In the contexts being considered herein, aesthetic tactics are engaged to address problems and conditions of the legitimacies of public knowledge.

Western logocentric orientations to meaning have been stumbling over questions of beauty for millennia. Plato banished poetry (and poets) from his ideal city accusing them of mimicry, untruth and of having a corrupting influence – preferring instead the reliability of philosophy and knowledge (Beardsley 1966; Janaway 2005). The interest in aesthetics that emerged in 18th and 19th century Europe was a response in part to perceived limitations in rational subjectivity, a criticism aimed at the failures of reason to serve Enlightenment's promise of political emancipation (Eagleton 1990; Ferry 1993). I am suggesting that such stumbling is being tactically deployed today to challenge conditions of domination in cultural contexts. The critical equation for this kind of resistance — and

also for its study — is in understanding the encounter between power’s regulatory designs and autonomous desire as it is resolved in the subjective expression of expectations of trust (as described in the previous chapter). The subjective integrities at stake in cultural texts influence the legitimacies of what those who would dominate would have others believe, and they do so, at least in part, through the aesthetic tactics engaged. Text making is part of the regulation and circulation of discursive legitimacies.

The eventualization of knowledge and power suggests that legitimacy must flow in both directions; that is, both knowledge and power must acquire legitimacy for eventualization to manifest. A central characteristic at work in these arrangements is visibility. Unseen subjects cannot be controlled, nor can they accommodate unknown expectations or commit to unknown obligations. My argument is that the visibility of the regulatory designs of domination — ‘fiats of power’ as Gordon (1999) calls them — is a condition of their legitimacy, which in turn necessitates their being legible, credible and appropriate in the circumstances. We cannot accommodate fiats that we do not understand, whose constituting conditions we do not believe, and which we believe to be inappropriate in the circumstances. These are all deeply subjective orientations whose link to action is arguably reflected most explicitly in the notion of ‘appropriateness’: where, in essence, the will to act manifests through approval. The autonomy of experiencing-subjects must agree, submit, yield, acquiesce, capitulate, obey, comply, defer, concur, approve, accede, concede, etc. – to and with fiats of power in order to act them out. There are important qualitative differences from easy agreement to reluctant submission, but in all cases – and this is crucial – autonomous desire accommodates the legitimacy of the arrangements. Tactical responses to domination address the legitimacies of these arrangements (their legibili-

ties, credibilities and appropriatenesses) through the (re)distribution of sensibilities concerning collective identity, exemplary validities, ambiguities and modes of apprehension.

In this chapter, I suggest that in considering tactical cultural responses to conditions of domination: (i) the conditions of legitimacy for power/knowledge depend in part on aesthetic experiences manifest in the discursive encounter between what power would design and the object of its desire to control; and (ii) one of the ways discursive resistance can manifest, and a means through which resistance to “truth” can complicate and resist its pillory as falseness, error, folly and madness, is through the tactical use of aesthetics to undermine legitimacies of domination.

The Legitimacies of Power

The concept of ‘legitimacy’ often refers to the degree to which those governed are in agreement with the systems of their governance (Cotta 1996; Hechter 2009; Tyler 2006; Zelditch 2001). It can sometimes refer to an objective measure of agreement, such as compatibility between the outcomes of governance and the values of those governed; or it can be a more subjective assessment of whether those ruled trust that they are being ruled fairly (Merquior 1980). Max Weber considered legitimation a measure of probability: legitimate forms of governance have high probabilities that actions will be oriented towards the maintenance of the political order (Merquior 1980; Weber 1978). What exactly is assessed may vary — compliance with tradition, devotion to charisma, observance of the rule of law, procedural impartiality, the communicative conditions necessary for consensus or the social conditions necessary for the inclusion of conflicting interests — but in every case, legitimacy rests on some form of volition on the part of those

subject to rules. Legitimacy describes a willing acceptance, agreement, compliance, obedience or acquiescence in and to the norms of power.

As I have argued, relations of power exist only in terms of uncertainty and limitation in that they presuppose the capacity for refusal by those who would be ruled (Hoy 2005; Foucault 1997a; Gordon 1999; Oakeshott 1975; O’Sullivan 2000). Under the ever-present conditions of resistance, then, power must communicate expectations and justifications to those who would be dominated in order to secure the legitimacy of its relations. Resistance *may* be possible without understanding⁶, but the kinds of willing participation on which democratic forms of governance largely depend for legitimacy requires an appreciation of what Neve Gordon (1992) calls “fiats of power” — the ways and means of compliance and their justifications. My contribution to this idea is the further observation that “appreciation” in this sense — the visibility of the fiats of power — depends on their being legible, the conditions of their application credible, and their being appropriate in the circumstances to those who in effect have agency over the legitimation process: those who would be ruled. The act of legitimation itself rests in the actions of the experiencing subject, and it is within this very equation that relations of power are entangled in questions of truth.

There is recent and growing interest in the study of ‘legitimacy’ in the context of *emergent* social structures, the informal hierarchies and orders of status governed (albeit ephemerally) through norms and conventions of control and deviance, the allocation of status functions, feelings of obligation and expectation, and the expression of sentiment and emotion (Zelditch 2001). Legitimacy in this less formal context expresses the social

⁶ For example, one imagines that children manifest resistance to the power conditions imposed by parents without always understanding the structures of order being resisted. It is a question for another

conditions of shared approval through feelings of obligation and responsibility to others that results in voluntary deferral and commitment “to decisions, rules and social arrangements “ (Tyler 2006, 376). *Obligation, commitment and expectation* are among the keys to understanding legitimacy in this context: it is the deference upon which the foundation of authority is based. Power works to predetermine social actions and enforce the legitimacy of experiences that maintain the conditions that do this.

The visibility of so-called “fiats of power” is critical in this process. A ‘fiat’ in the traditional sense is an authoritative decree — such as a royal fiat forbidding hunting in the King’s forest, perhaps nailed to a post in the town square. Foucault’s genealogical notion of discipline (metaphorically illustrated with Walter Bentham’s panopticon model for a prison) depends on two kinds of visibility: on the visibility of the subject (power must conceive the subject it designs to dominate), and more germane to my argument, on the visibility of power’s expectations to the experiencing subject. The panopticon works through the internalization of power’s normative fiats (Foucault [1977] 1995, 202-3):

A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation. So it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behavior, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application, the patient to the observation of the regulations ... He who is subjected to a field of visibility, *and who knows it*, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporeal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects: it is a perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation and which is always decided in advance. [emphasis added]

Neve Gordon’s larger argument is a critique of what he describes as the passivity of Foucault’s subject. To overcome this limitation, Neve turns to Hannah Arendt (1958; 1977) and her aesthetic approach to reality which roots the subjective possibility for au-

time.

tonomy in the plurality of display, response and the disclosure of ‘being’, where freedom is ontologically founded on the condition of natality (Gordon 1999). It is a position I more or less agree with, but I do not think we have to abandon Foucault in order to encounter the conditions of resistance and dissent in the experiencing subject. In his later writings, as I have described variously throughout, Foucault recognized in aesthetic experience the possibility for overcoming the symbiotic dilemma of truth/power/subjectivity. “Truth” in this transgressive configuration is understood by Foucault as desire and constitution rather than prescription; as a strategy; as style; as exemplary possibility (Foucault 2007b). Foucault called these opportunities ‘practices of the self’ and envisioned them as a means of limiting power. It is this very tension that I am suggesting plays out — or that can play out — in the cultural texts of dissent through tactical aesthetics.

Violation of social norms and expectations (e.g. normative fiats) has been studied under the now somewhat discredited terminology of ‘deviance’. According to Miller et al. (2001), the rubric of study under the term “deviance” has shifted into other areas, differentiating into more specialized considerations of norm-transgression in specific social settings. My interest is in the object of its study: legal and illegal norm-violation and in particular the theory of accounts. The notion of deviance recognizes that “norms are created situationally and have social consequences” (47). Violations of norms will be censured unless the perpetrators can account for the aberrant quality of what they have done. Scott and Lyman (1968) identify two kinds of ‘accounts’: (i) excuses, which admit the transgression and seek forgiveness; and (ii) justifications⁷, which admit the transgression but argue for its necessity in the circumstances. A justification admits the expectations

⁷ The typology of justifications they present is: denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, appeal to loyalties, sad tale and self-fulfillment.

that have been transgressed – is “an instance of them, logically derives from them, is instrumental to them, or is correlated to them” (Zelditch 2001, 7) – but engages “socially approved vocabularies” in order to “neutralize an act or its consequences when one or both are called into question” (Scott and Lyman 1968, 51).⁸ Political dissent and resistance to the effects of power, I am suggesting, can be understood as a kind of transgression of expectations and obligations which dissenters argue is justified. Legitimation describes the discursive process through which these experiences of transgression are mediated into meaningful — or subjugated — status. Cultural dissent is a bid to challenge the terms on which legitimacy is maintained.

Zelditch (2001) argues that a key to understanding social legitimation is the link between 'performance expectations' and 'status characteristics' which together describe the ways people expect social action to unfold based on ascribed or perceived status characteristics. Expectation states, argues Zelditch, emerge in response to specific characteristics that accord status (i.e. genius, skill capacity, intelligence, etc.) and also in response to diffuse status characteristics such as race, gender and class. Legitimacy and legitimation are bound in perceptions and expectations about conditions of identity (Connolly 1984; Zelditch 2001). Returning to the larger question of the legitimacies of power, the foundation of politics reflects a tension between a will to govern, which is a will to create community consent, and the ongoing efforts of those whose consent is sought to demonstrate the consequences of the impossibility of consensus (Ranci re 1992). *Political truth*

⁸ The process of justification has characteristics in common with narrative structure which may also point to ways in which dissent is addressed in a news setting. Similar to how justification links the unacceptable with pre-existing norms and expectations, Ricoeur (1984) suggests that narratives render human experience into meaning in part by reconciling pre-understanding with the new (Ricoeur 1984). Narratives, according to Ricoeur, are the organizing principle for creating meaning and understanding 'now' as a preoccupation with making the present, retaining memory and awaiting the future. Justification similarly

as such is the verification and demonstration of consequences of this disparity – a “handling”, as Ranci re says, of the consequential wrongs from efforts to govern. Dorothy Smith calls the naturalized relations of domination “relations of ruling” which reflect the transformation of everyday experiences of domination into objectified and legitimate forms of knowledge through text-based social organization (Campbell and Manicom 1995; Smith 1990; 1993). The naturalization of relations of domination thrusts verification of their consequences into controversy and opens the possibility for negotiation over their epistemic legitimacy.

Gordon (2002) writes that the dependency of power on visibility raises the question of the conditions of possibility for visibility itself. Visibility (in the sense of a normative fiat tied to certain relations of power) is a sensibility and a perception of 'how things are' in terms of responsibilities, obligations, commitments and expectations within which we have a place. The relations of ruling accreted through discourse and texts are grounded in feelings of obligation and responsibility to others but can only be so to the extent that they are expected and approved. Unexpected and disapproved obligations can only exist after the fact as an imposition, and even then the feeling of obligation cannot be imposed; the obligation itself is a felt response in a particular circumstance. Resisting the effects of relations of power can now be understood as an exercise, at least in some instances, in challenging the legitimacy of extant relations of domination.

I am suggesting a tripartite understanding of the conditions of legitimacy in the sense described: that of *legibility*, *credibility* and *appropriateness*. Legibility describes a condition of understandability — in order for a subjective condition of commitment, ob-

organizes pre-understanding and expectation in such a way that unprecedented (and unaccepted occurrences) remerge with our perceptions of integrity.

ligation or expectation to manifest, the normative expectations of power must be legible. A law written in Latin, for example, has little use as an instrument of legitimate power to condition the future behaviour of someone who does not understand Latin (means other than fiat will have to be used to achieve desired outcomes). Similarly, the conditions giving rise to commitment, obligation and expectation must be considered credible. If I do not believe in the probability of the conditions then my levels of commitment will be less certain; for example, an obligation to pay tax, but my belief that I am not a citizen; or an obligation to report harmful side-effects from experimental pharmaceuticals, but my belief that results do not demonstrate the necessary levels of harm that would require reportage. And finally, even if what is expected is understood, and the conditions that have given rise to the expectation are believed, levels of commitment and obligation will be responsive to an assessment of how appropriate the expectation is — for example, I may understand parking rules, and I may acknowledge that I have parked illegally, but I might still refuse to pay because I think the obligation (to pay the fine) is inappropriate. This says nothing about other mechanisms for enforcing the same normative fiats (i.e. court action, seizure of assets, etc.). My point is that power's control over compliance through discursive means (through the truths it requires us to discover) — the visibility of those expectations — depends on their being understood, the conditions of their implication believed, and finally that they are approved of in the circumstances.

Subjective integrity and epistemic dissent

As discussed in chapter two, language acts expressed as “truth” involve authors/creators in commitments to patterns of trust. Communicating “truth” requires a

bridging between the ontological integrities of authors/creators with the conditions of legitimacy organized by power, i.e. the genealogical condition of “truth” where what is visible as “truth” is conditioned by relations of power. In Western terms, knowledge and “truth” emerge from structures of legitimacy rooted in rational argumentation and empirical evidence: knowledge is founded at its most basic level on principles that do not require justification, but which provide a foundation for knowledge from which all other beliefs must be justified (Larrabee 2006; Rescher 1974; 2003). With the emergence of scientific positivism, Western cultures adopted what remains today, generally speaking and certainly in terms of political and popular cultures, its dominant orientations towards objectivist, quantifiable, empirically provable and universally valid standards of rational proof (Kincheloe 2008). We can think about these orientations as a genealogical expression of the contours of integrity — the expectations, commitments and obligations that define orientations to “truth” (McKinzie 1984) — that must be contended with in public commentary on reality and that reflect particular arrangements and relations of power.

There are disciplines of scholarship that have struggled to name the conditions and relations of power that we find ourselves in (in Western terms) and the epistemologies of their undoing. Dorothy Smith challenged the institutional production of power through sociological norms by locating observers (scientists, scholars, researchers – and for my own purposes, I would add journalists) somewhere within existing relations of ruling (Smith 1990; 1993). If we consider these relations made up of “feelings of obligation and responsibility to others” (Tyler 2006, 390), we can consider Smith’s “standpoint theory” as a way for observers to acknowledge the ways they are implicated within hegemonic

relations of power. Stand point theory would make the observer's expectations visible. Feminist, postcolonial and other critical scholarships have struggled to do just this: make the dominant relations of power on which certain kinds of truth depend visible in order to manifest and encourage their undoing. A rational, empirical epistemology has been criticized as (i) rooted in a *cognitive* state which, in turn, indicates an ontological dichotomy between mind and body that (ii) is premised on the conception of subjects as disembodied and nonsocial, a trouble that extends to the procedures of systematizing what counts as knowledge as also being from a detached and disinterested vantage point, i.e. bringing to the fore criteria for epistemic legitimacy based on notions of objectivity and absolute forms of disembodied truth (Larrabee 2006). These conditions have in turn been critiqued as foundation for the rational legitimation of racist, sexist and colonial relations (Harding 1992; 2008; Spivak 1999; 2010; Weinstein 1995).

In response, there have emerged 'alternative epistemologies' which not only challenge traditional grounds of epistemic legitimacy, but which seek to disrupt the relations of power through which they are organized (Larrabee 2006). These are theories of 'knowing' grounded in the lived experiences of people embodied through *practices* of resistance – indeed, very much like what Foucault described as the subjugated object of his investigations (Foucault 1980, pp. 78-92). "Resistance epistemology", for example, calls for a "withdrawal from the ways of making sense of the world which use Western/Eurocentric scientific models" in order to explore the irrational and the invisible and to create spaces of understanding for experience which resists power (Larrabee 2006, 459).

Indigenous movements have generated resistance and dissent through the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges”, patterns of mobilization that embody (i) the defense of social and cultural differences linked to autonomy and territory; and (ii) logics of relation and co-adjustment that reject the organizing logics of the state (and its centralized decision-making and concentration of authority) and capital (with its equivalential value system that homogenizes all value as economic) (Aparicio and Blaser 2008; Robinson and Tormey 2009). These are alternatives to modernity instantiated at the outer territorial margins of where modernity’s influences are felt, either because they never (or barely) reached there or because the territories were abandoned (Aparicio and Blaser 2008). It is important to remember that from an indigenous perspective “the subordination of non-modern worlds is often imposed initially through openly violent means (i.e. military campaigns, persecution of idolatries, forced schooling, forced displacement from unproductive lands and the like) and only later through more subtle discursive means (Aparicio and Blaser 2008, 64). Epistemological controversies are the very ground out of which relations of domination and power emerge.

This has been a significant digression, but helpful for understanding more clearly what dissent and resistance (to truth) might look like in the context of mediated cultures. The news story — and other attempts to make or challenge truth-claims — will emerge in anticipation of imagined audiences (and their responses) with and for whom the journalist will have feelings of responsibility, commitment and obligation. These are – or rather, how they are expressed becomes – the expectations of social relationality, the “deontic powers” through which relations emerge with their own epistemic objectivity and the legitimacy of expectation (Searle 2008). Incidents of dissent and resistance, whether as the

text or what the text is about, will touch in some way the legitimacy of relationalities – their legibility, credibility and, thinking back to the ways contexts demand suitable modes of communication, their appropriateness. Dissenting kinds of journalism, and more generally, cultural forms of dissent, will entail an inquiry into the legibility, credibility and appropriateness of relations instantiated in the languages of representation that challenge in some way or deviate from the expectations out of which dominant epistemological assumptions emerge.

It is also worth taking a moment to digress yet again to consider the nature of ‘resistance’ being discussed. Not surprisingly, ‘resistance’ is a contested term. There is consent among those that study resistance *in situ* that it is an action that is oppositional, but beyond that there are many disagreements (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). For example, scholars debate over whether resistance must be recognizable as such, and if so, by whom: the resister, the target, or a third party? There are also debates about the role of intent in resistance: is it relevant at all? And if so, how should it be assessed? Hollander and Einwohner assemble a typology of considerations, many of which are surprisingly confounded by an aesthetic approach to resistance. For example, they propose the categories of overt or covert resistance. Three of the four cases that I consider engage in tactics that at the very least deploy overt/covert tactics in equal measure, and more likely blur the distinction by situating dissident experiences within ambiguous or even comforting contexts. Hollander and Einwohner also propose ‘missed resistance’ and ‘attempted resistance’ as categories, a consideration of how who recognizes the act as resistance — the resistor, the target, or a 3rd party — influences whether or not the act is perceived as resistance. In all cases under consideration in this study, the originators of the cultural texts

in question wanted to challenge certain dominant perceptions. And, from my vantage point, did so. But assessing whether their “targets” recognized their acts as resistance is either impossible, irrelevant or non-sensical. That said, the typology of Hollander and Einwohner does offer at least some limiting conditions for the applicability of the present analysis: I am considering resistance that is both overt and covert; that is, resistance that is self-aware of its oppositional orientation and that registers to third-party observation (namely mine) as an oppositional action in a cultural/communicative context.

In terms of what resistance encounters, Antonio Gramsci’s (1970) notions of hegemony are helpful for articulating a way of thinking about epistemological domination. Hegemony describes an ongoing negotiation over legitimacy and value that takes place within the larger processes of social formation and that results in dominant imaginaries and bodies of knowledge within which are embedded and naturalized relationships of power. Raymond Williams describes hegemony as “the central, effective and dominant system of meanings and values, which are not merely abstract, but which are organized and lived ... It is a whole body of practices and expectations, our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of man in his world” (1980, 39). Hegemony is a competitive understanding of public knowledge wherein those relations that disagree and undermine one’s position are actively discredited and eliminated.

Hegemony reflects the ways in which dominant and subordinate relations are naturalized and socialized into unproblematic status - *habits of power*, in a sense. Resistance is the knowing engagement with these ‘habits’ — of the conditions, assumptions and expectations that relations of power would prefer and perpetuate — and from within these an identification and exploitation of “cracks and vulnerabilities” that expose the

production of hegemony to disruption (Ewick and Silbey 2003, 1330). The visibility of power's normative fiats is again of central importance. Resistance *must* begin from recognizable meaning and therefore must be engaged with reworking or refashioning these conditions in one form or another. Ewick and Silbey (2003) suggest a four-part framework for understanding this process of awareness and disruption: (i) conscious awareness of a subordinate relationality; (ii) conscious awareness of an opportunity to change this in some way; (iii) a justification for transgression rooted in justice and fairness; (iv) institutional indecipherability, confusion or unreadability.

Resistance is a refashioning, reworking, redistribution, reassembly, even disassembly of the expectations, assumptions, obligations and commitments on which relations of power are premised. As Raby (2005) outlines, tactics of resistance can involve tactics of the body and pleasure as strategies for questioning/doubting the subjectivities demanded by discourse; performative disruptions that acknowledge the gap between language, discourse and action (*vis-a-vis* Judith Butler 1993); and disidentifications in the form of the redeployment of signs, roles, and interpellations into disruptions of dominant messaging (*vis-à-vis* Jose Munoz 1999). All of these approaches demonstrate the inextricable imbrication of disrupting expectations, assumptions and obligations and the (re)formation of social identity — of recognizing it, challenging it, rewriting it. Disidentification in particular, Raby writes, suggests “new tactics of resistance, ones that recognize that we are interpellated into ideological apparatuses, but that we can insinuate our-

selves into them, distort them and come away with something different at the same time” (2005, 166).⁹

Turning to news practices more specifically, studies of dissent in news tend to focus on (i) the orientation of journalists and/or news organizations towards dissent (for example, in the study of radical or activist media), or (ii) the coverage of dissent as an object of news interest subjected to the conventions and practices of news routines. In both cases, there are two underlying assumptions: the first, is that there is a distinction to be made between kinds of news media: mainstream and professional journalists, on the one hand, representing large commercial news organizations, and forms of journalism oriented against the production of hegemony and who often self-identify as resistant or alternative and as a form of social action; and second, that the former works against dissident voices through censorship, marginalization and demonization (Atkinson 2010; Atton 2002a; 2002b; Downing 2001; Howley 2005; Kozolanka et al. 2012; Rodriguez 2001; Waltz 2005).¹⁰ The latter assumption has produced a significant amount of empirical

9 There are sociological variations in the literature studying resistance, in particular concerning the conditions under which resistance can be said to manifest: overt, covert, unwitting, target-defined, externally-defined, missed, attempted (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). In this light, the kind of resistance I am interested in is overt

10 There are various terms used to describe non-mainstream media, including alternative, independent, autonomous, community, radical and citizens. Alternative media is often identified by what it isn't: mainstream, commercial, large, for-profit, hierarchically organized, hegemonic (Perruzzo 1996; Schulman 1992; Waltz 2005). Alternative media have been defined by *structures* distinct from mainstream media institutions; *participation* of citizens in the news-making processes; and *activism* through engagement in social transformation (Kozolanka et al. 2012). '*Independent media*' suggests a separation from some governing context, or as Shaw and Robertson (1997, 9): *Autonomous media* suggests striving for independence from corporate and government power (Uzelman 2005). *Community media* emphasizes the participatory quality of new-making and organizational management, that the news organization is structured to encourage public participation in response to dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content (Howley 2005). '*Radical media*' is a term popularized by John Downing (2001) that emphasizes the political and oppositional role of the media practice described. Citizen's media intervenes and transforms institutionalized relationships and the conceptual frameworks on which they depend for stability (Rodriguez 2001).

Atton (2002a; 2002b) suggests a model "radical" journalism based on four attributes: (i) opposition to mainstream media; (ii) that they have as a goal the transformation of social relations and the roles and responsibilities of journalists; (iii) their practices are aimed at liberation from power or dominant insti-

work identifying a “protest paradigm” in mainstream news narratives that characterizes dissent by emphasizing violence and criminality, by favouring the public opinion of critical experts and frightened onlookers for source material, but rarely the voices of the dissenters themselves, and that characterize dissent using strategies of delegitimation, marginalization and demonization (Gitlin 1980; Hallin 1986; Hackett and Zhao 1994; Hertog and McLeod 1995; Iyengar 1991; McLeod and Detenber 1999; McLeod and Hertog 1998; McCluskey et al. 2009; Murray et al. 2008; Shoemaker 1982; 1984; Smith et al. 2001). In either case, be it the voices of resistant media struggling for visibility or the demonization of dissent by mainstream media, a crucial set of factors I suggest are the conditions of ‘legitimacy’ and how they are brokered within the texts themselves. The legibility, credibility and appropriateness of the acts of dissent/deviance in question will play out in part through the aesthetic experiences aroused within the cultural texts in question.

What is at stake in the competitions over legitimacy are the foundations of eventualization — the nexus between knowledge and power that delineates relationships of

tutions and practices; and (iv) they operate as autonomous rather than aggregated or affiliated media hubs and with loose and less rigid internal hierarchies. Linking this discussion of dissenting journalism to the earlier discussion of the role of legitimacy the production of power, we can see that the first and fourth criteria address credibility, and that the second and third address notions of appropriateness. Both of these categories (credibility and appropriateness) and their ties to radical journalism (i.e. the link between oppositional intent and autonomy and the role of credibility in struggles over truth; and the link between journalistic responsibilities, liberation and the role of appropriateness in the struggles over truth within relations of power) are further reinforced by what Atton identifies as commonalities of style of radical journalism. “Native reporting”, which is an insider’s perspective without distance from the events and people being written about, and the subversive use of tabloidization reinforce notions of appropriateness; and critical positioning in comparison to mainstream news and the use of cultural opportunities as platform for the voices of activists reinforces issues of credibility. ‘Native reporting’ is particularly important in the discussion of dissent and journalism because of the ways in which dissenting media narrow and often erase altogether the “convenient gap” (as Howley (2005) calls it) between producer and audience. These are voices that radically reject the objective detached and disinterested points of view of mainstream journalism, preferring instead the epistemologically superior (by their accounts) reporting by people who are involved in what is being reported on.

domination and submission in the perpetuation of the status quo. Within hegemonic truths are embedded webs of expectations, commitments, and obligations rooted in embodied conditions of trust constituted through language choices. A desire for coherence, and an understanding and expectation of human behavior grounds 'being' in temporalized conditions expressed through language. Expectations, and in particular, commitments and obligations are exemplary terms of trust and "truth" to the extent that we are capable of doing what we say we will. Perceptions of reality will be coloured by beliefs about how self and others will behave in the future. It need hardly be said that who I am in relation to others roots such considerations in perspectives of social identity, or the *sensus communis*: a sense of belonging in relation to perception of 'other'. My expectations about behavior in terms of obligations and commitments will also influence the groups with which I have a sense of belonging and how I orient myself to the groups to which I do not belong. These are relational qualities at play in communication that influence perceptions and experiences and expressive choices concerning "truth" and knowledge.

Within the production of legitimacies of knowledge, we can also see a concern with ambiguity – most often and especially in empirical and rational terms, a drive to reduce ambiguity and limit polysemy. Ambiguity, in this sense, is the enemy of meaning, of knowledge, of understanding, of truth. And yet, in a genealogical context, there must always be at work some technique, some style of communicative choice to mask and obfuscate epistemic limitations. It can be a pre-conditional mode of apprehension — for example, the way a genre exerts influence on communicative choices and understanding — that delineates the stakes and the ends of a context (Lyotard 1988; Smith 2008) and

which, among other possibilities, hides epistemologically qualifying techniques such as the assumption that subjects and objects are absolutely severable.

In each form of aesthetic experience the conditions of truth must be apprehended as legible, credible and appropriate. The “conditions” are the normative fiats of power, i.e. meaning bound in relations of trust and expectation that reflect particular arrangements of domination and submission. Resistance can be likened to pulling at a loose thread in a sweater (or more *apropos*, a tightly knitted straightjacket); some threads will weaken the structure, some will leave holes but cause minimal structural damage, some will undo the sweater entirely. Legitimacy is like the weave holding the structure together, resistance — in this study, through the pre-cognitive experiences I am describing as aesthetic — describes ways of undermining the integrity of the structure.

In summary, the intent to refashion social relationality that lies at the heart of dissent and resistance encounters the relations of power it would change. These are encounters within the ongoing production of hegemonic imaginaries and fields of knowledge that allocate legitimacy to experience. An example would be the ways traditional Western ideation works to discredit and silence feminist, postcolonial and indigenous epistemological differences. The tactics of dissent must address power’s condition of possibility: visibility; which in turn requires an engagement with the obligations, expectations, commitments, and approvals that underlie the legitimacy of the extant relations of power. The ontological foundation for all of this, and for dissent, is human freedom without which power lacks sensibility. Through strategies of representation (i.e. news journalism and other forms of cultural expression interested in “truth”), dissent in the form of resistance to the relations of power coincident with domination — for exam-

ple, Euclidean epistemology — renders obligations, commitments and expectations in new and destabilizing ways that will encounter modulations that would encourage or dictate their interpretation as false, folly, irrelevant or mad. These modulations equivocate within structures of legitimacy — not determinable by a journalist or other cultural producer, but expected by them. The expectations will encourage legitimacy or undermine it within terms of legibility, credibility and appropriateness. We can find this discursive equivocation playing out — indeed, as the central struggle for meaning within — the aesthetic dimensions of truth-claims.

Chapter 4 - Case Studies and Methodology

Before I introduce my case studies and approach, I would like to restate my problematic based on the foregoing discussion. In answer to the question: how can cultural resistance overcome the genealogical double-bind of having to protest against the “truth” without seeming foolish or insane, I began with journalism as a template for how “truth” becomes visible in public culture. There are other cultural forms of “truth” – for example, sociology, science, medicine, etc. – but my interest is more narrowly construed towards popular forms of truth-telling that address wide and non-expert general publics. And my focus is technical rather than sociological: how “truths” are rendered in practices of journalism and their conditions of epistemic legitimacy within objective modes of apprehension. What emerged was a view of news-truth as epistemologically unstable and complicated by competing orientations towards objectivity (each with its own methods of verification), dependence on subjective assessments such as states of deception, and whose conventions serve in part to overcome epistemic *aporia* (i.e. assumed facts, genre and form, framing, etc.). Together, the incomplete quality of “truth” is suggestive of an assessment of news as performance: a set of practices and conventions aimed at persuading audiences of the truth-value of texts that acquire truth-status when successful. This relationship between journalist and audience is a key element in the production of meaning by journalists. Frames, for example, are techniques rooted in expectations about audiences used to guide understanding. Objective modes of apprehension in journalism are also grounded in relational concerns of trust with audiences. Assertions of journalistic “truth” entangle the subjective integrities of journalists necessarily in anticipation of ex-

pected audiences and within discursive truths. The production of senses of belonging, exemplary validities (manifest through expectations, commitments and obligations), regulating of ambiguities and competing modes of apprehension suggest an aesthetic approach to understanding the production of discursive legitimacy.

Returning to the question of cultural dissent, the subjective orientation of resisting the effects of power must address the conditions of possibility of power in the cultural visibility of its fiats: the expectations, obligations and commitments that power would have adopted as subjective experience. These fiats can be understood as ‘structures of legitimacy’: competing terms of sensibility that would orient the production of subjectivities. Legitimacy is a deeply subjective experience rooted in conditions of legibility, credibility and appropriateness and grounded in the agreement of the experiencing-subject who remains free to the extent that power is sensible. Making public truth-claims requires assertions of integrity which must encounter the conditions of legitimacy organized by power. Dissent is a way of rejecting the ‘structures of legitimacy’ of power and/or asserting alternative legitimacies. The legibilities, credibilities and appropriatenesses of competing ‘structures of legitimacy’ is the terrain wherein sensibilities (i.e. aesthetic experience) can be used tactically to disrupt, reject, challenge and resist the legitimacies of the conditions of power from which discursive “truth” emerges, and also to assert alternative ‘structures of legitimacy’ and sensibilities of “truth”. Aesthetic experiences shape perceptions.

That said, here is how my analysis of cultural dissent will proceed. I will first assess the subjective integrities being asserted in each case of cultural production – author/creators orientations to “truth” and perceptions of public knowledge (which is an

assessment of their perceptions of hegemonic understanding). These reveal the ‘structures of legitimacy’ circulating in the public cultures into which their cultural texts appear. I then assess what assertions are being made contrary to hegemonic understandings. These are the forms of dissent articulating alternative relationships and alternative structures of legitimacy. I then consider how aesthetic tactics are used within these challenges to destabilize the legitimacies of power.

Let me now introduce my case studies.

Cases and Approach

I will consider four very different forms of cultural production: (i) citizen’s journalism; (ii) community/public art intervention (iii) sculpture/installation; and (iv) experimental community. I have chosen cultural examples that vary widely one from the other in their methods of public presentation -- online/print; installation in and projection onto urban surfaces; art gallery installation; and a large festival in a public park. What they share is a desire on the part of their author/creators to address and challenge the legitimacy of dominant “truths”, and the tactic of doing so by producing meaning through other than rational and empirical means alone.

It is important to clarify the relationship between my choices of case study and my emphasis on the production of “truth” in journalism. I am making the assertion that all of my case studies qualify within the genre of journalism, at least in terms of an assessment based on their approach to the production of epistemic legitimacy. Which is to say that I am *not* making the assertion that my case studies are news, but rather that their techniques of asserting and challenging “truth” could be used to make news. Other considerations might prevent their ready inclusion in the category of journalism such as the pres-

ence of conflict, relevance to audiences, timeliness, unexpectedness of the event described, reference to elite nations, continuity with existing news narratives, fit within categories of coverage, reference to elite persons, and negativity (Allan 1999). These questions fall outside of the present study. Based on the preceding discussion, my narrower proposition is that authors/creators who set out to challenge dominant forms of public knowledge must navigate competing structures of legitimacy, and that one of the ways they do this is through the tactical use of aesthetics in such a way that legitimacies of power are challenged on terms other than, or in excess of, the terms of legitimacy for coincident forms of (dominant) truth. In order to assess this proposition, my inquiry focuses on examples of cultural dissent by asking the following questions: (1) What are the authors/creators' orientation to "truth"? (2) What are the subjective and dominant integrities at play in the cultural work? (3) What aesthetic tactics are engaged to navigate competing structures of legitimacy? My approach to answering these questions is to (i) select cultural forms where the authors/creators are asserting some form of "truth" or challenging some form of "truth"; (ii) interview authors/creators about their work and what understandings and experiences they expected among audiences; (iii) analyze the competing structures of legitimacy and aesthetic tactics engaged in the cultural examples.

The central methodological consideration in any study is on what basis is the legitimacy of knowledge determined (Carter and Little 2007). My grounding orientation in this study falls into the broad category of "critical qualitative research" as defined by Kincheloe and McLaren (2003), a descendant of Frankfurt School critical theory that has grown to encompass a base set of assumptions applied to the problem of 'meaning' in research: (i) all thought is mediated by relations of power; (ii) facts are inextricable from

values; (iii) the articulation of signified and signifier is mediated by social and political relations; (iv) language is central to the formation of subjectivity; (v) some subjectivities are more privileged than others; (vi) oppression in contemporary terms is reflected by the naturalization of relationships of domination; and (vii) oppression has many forms in addition to economic. My interest in the case studies in this dissertation is founded on questions about meaning and power. To the extent that life can be “lived as a work of art” in order to transcend the conditions of possibility for subjectivity (as Foucault speculated), a careful consideration of the aesthetics of cultural dissent should reveal tactics engaged to navigate the competing legitimacies of domination and resistance (Foucault 1984a, 350-1).

That said, there are of course widely diverging approaches to questions of cultural meaning. As referred to briefly earlier, communication has representational and relational dimensions, each of which attract their own kinds of study. The analysis of content tends to focus on “an objective, measureable, verifiable account of the manifest content of messages” (Fiske 1990, 136). Content analysis focuses on the systems of signs and their referents (Berleson 1952; Gerbner 1970; Krippendorf 2004). Sociological, rhetorical and social semiotic approaches, on the other hand, emphasize the contexts of communication – the motivations and desires of communicants within institutional and social conditions, and how these conditions manifest relationally through communicative acts (Hodge and Kress 1988; Mattelart 1979; Mulvey 1975; Said 1978; Williams 1980; Zelizer 2004a). Discourse analysis emphasizes relations of power manifest in the language itself and how specific themes reflect conditions of power within which and from which the communicants achieve their subjectivities (Fairclough 1992; Starks and Trinidad 2007; van Dijk

1987; Wertz et al 2011; Wodak and Meyer 2009). The aesthetic analysis proposed in this dissertation reflects the objects of study for many of these approaches including the meanings being asserted by author/creators, the motivations of communicants, how communicative events influence relationality, structures of power that give rise to meaning, and the tensions surrounding struggles over hegemonic meanings. An aesthetic analysis as proposed arranges these elements of communication through the categories of aesthetic experience described for the purposes of better understanding the relationship between communication and power.

A methodological approach that addresses some of the epistemological complexity at work in this study is 'critical qualitative research' (Carspecken 1996; Yanchar et al. 2005). Critical methodology acknowledges the limitations of knowledge (Yanchar et al. 2005, 34-35): "...a critical methodology (qua theory of inquiry) consists partly in a network of background assumptions and partly in the adoption, development, alteration and application of research strategies that offer the best promise of deepening or enriching the researchers' understandings of the subject matter." A critical methodological approach emphasizes methods as practice-oriented within a focus on the creative process of theory formation. It recognizes that methodologies are evolving and contextually sensitive and reflect the specifics of research questions and contexts, and it accepts that the philosophical underpinnings of its own ontological, axiological and epistemological assumptions are open to questioning.

A critical methodology views research design, validity and results as part of the process of argument construction and not as a means to delivering up value-free ahistorical and infallible information (Yanchar et al. 2005). Carspecken and other critical meth-

odologists argue that all experience – as limited perspectival phenomenon - is mediated through relationships of power. But rather than abandoning the value of “truth” to radical contingency, critical methodologists approach “truth” through multiple ontological categories of experience: subjective ontological (states of mind, feelings, etc.), objective ontological (objects and events “to which all people have access”), and normative-evaluative ontological (agreements on goodness, rightness and appropriateness) (Carspecken 1996, 20). There is an echo, here, of Fairclough’s three dimensions of discourse analysis: language analysis within the text, the processes of textual production and interpretation, and the institutional circumstances that shape both (Fairclough 1992; 1995). In the case studies in question, here, these competing dimensions of meaning will emerge through the competing structures of legitimacy – those of authors and of who they expect as audiences. To take one example, *Broken City Lab* identified its audiences as a local, national and international art community; arts funding agencies; local elected officials; and the general public of Windsor, ON. The aesthetic tactics engaged reflect the competing legitimacies of arts traditions, funding criteria from arts agencies; municipal political considerations; local popular culture. My focus on the texts as discourse and on the expected meanings and experiences tactically sought by authors/creators provides relevant information necessary for assessing the theoretical proposition that cultural texts of dissent reveal the play of meanings through which institutional, relational and social legitimacies are engaged.

I have selected four sites of cultural production which are Canadian, current, stylistically diverse and that are challenging existing relations of power. Each was chosen because of an appearance of aesthetic sophistication, a perception I put to the test by apply-

ing the aesthetic framework of analysis as described. All of the cases involve projects and texts produced between 2008 and 2010.

My first case is *The Dominion* magazine, a cooperative news organization created in 2004, based in Montreal, with a national and international focus, that encourages citizen participation in the news-making process. *The Dominion* produces a print magazine (approx. 30 pages) five times annually and maintains a website whose content is updated more frequently. Revenues are primarily from donations, with some revenue derived through advertising and public grants. Membership in the coop is obtained by contributing services, content or financial resources. In 2008, *The Dominion* created the first of what are now five Media Coops, regionally located independent media collectives (in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Halifax). The media coops are autonomous; each facilitates public participation in the news process through an independent website; and each coop is invited to contribute two pages of content to the print magazine. For this study, I focused on Issue #68: *Special Issue on the G8/G20* published in the weeks leading up to the G8/G20 gatherings in Toronto, in June 2010 — an event which precipitated the largest mass arrest of protesters in Canadian history. I interviewed founding and senior editor, Tim McSorley.

The second case is *Broken City Lab* (BCL), an artist collective that describes itself as “an artist-led interdisciplinary creative research group that tactically disrupts and engages the city, its communities, and its infrastructures to reimagine the potential for action in the collapsing post-industrial city of Windsor, Ontario” (BCL 2011). The artist collective was created in 2008, after a particularly large-scale layoff in local industries. Windsor has been hard hit by the collapse of Detroit's automobile economy (Detroit's

population has decreased by almost two-thirds since 1970 (Linebaugh 2011)). BCL receives grants from public agencies (Canada Council for the Arts has been a significant contributor), public donations and financial contributions by members of the collective. They describe their efforts as “events, workshops, performances, and interventions” that “offer a sometimes momentary, sometimes extended, injection of creativity into a situation, surface, place, or community” (BCL). I focused on four of their public art interventions:

(i) *Text-In-Transit*, an ongoing series of text “advertisements” in Windsor public transit. The brief messages were selected from responses to a call for public submissions. Text phrases tended towards the enigmatic such as:

“Who is sitting next to you?”	“Please don't leave the city”
“You changed everything”	“More Love. Less Handles.”
“You made my day.”	“Everything is possible”
“The future is here.”	“You are right where you need to be.”
“Make things happen”	“You are amazing”
“Altogether, now”	“Make things better”
“Save a city”	“Community hug”
“The automobile can only take us so far ...”	
“It won't cost you anything and think of how nice it will be.”	
“neighbourhoods / neighborhoods”	

The short statements were printed on advertising panels and placed in buses. The call for submissions explained: “We’re looking for submissions of short statements, poems, and stories from anyone in the city that will help to change the conversation about Windsor!!!”.

(ii) Sites of Apology and Hope: This project involved local residents in identifying places in the city of Windsor that offer hope for the future, and ones that residents would like to apologize for. The sites were selected through a series of community meetings. After the sites were selected (25 sites of apology and 25 sites of hope), BCL visited each site to present a ribbon and to say a few public words of designation. A map was created showing the location of the sites, and BCL offered walking tours to explain why they had been chosen.

(iii) Cross-border Communication: Over the course of three nights in November 2009, BCL projected large-scale illuminated messages onto buildings that face Detroit along the Windsor waterfront, in an effort to communicate with the city of Detroit. The messages read:

“We've missed you” “Want to be friends?” “We're in this together”
“Windsor calling” “We want to see you” “We need to talk”
“The crisis is here” “Kick out the jams” “Don't lose hope”
“What's the next move?” “Windsor + Detroit = BFF”
“Tomorrow will be better” “Goodnight, Detroit”

(iv) Make This Better: This is an ongoing installation using specially constructed cardboard letters coated in resin, tape and reflective glass beads that spell out “MAKE THIS BETTER”. The letters are installed in various locations in Windsor that BCL wants to suggest need attention, care and rethinking (see accompanying picture). For this study, I interviewed three members of BCL: Justin Lan-

gois who is the founder and current executive director; and contributing core members Michele Soulliere and Christine Naccarato.

My third case is *Ladies Sasquatch*, a sculpture / installation by Canadian artist Alyson Mitchell. *Ladies Sasquatch* is made up of six giant female humanoid figures, covered in fur, gathered around a camp fire. Their bodies, the platform that holds them, the fire, the small animals scurrying around the figures, are made with a mishmash of sewn together fabrics and “fun furs” reclaimed from textile objects gathered in second-hand stores — materials such as chenille bedspreads, shag rugs, hand-knit blankets, etc. Their faces are animalistic with mouths made from real animal teeth and tongues recessed into fabric cavities, and the figures are distinctly female and naked. Breasts, nipples, vulvas, and asses are on display, which merits special mention because of the controversies this installation has provoked. As I have never seen in the installation *in situ*, I would like to borrow from two different descriptions offered in the catalogue that accompanied its installation, January - March 2009, at the McMaster University Museum of Art. The first is from an essay by Carla Garnet:

Mitchell's dream girls are epic. *Ladies Sasquatch* foregrounds six of these she-beast sculptures, surrounded by a whole family of familiars – tiny mammals taxidermied in cotton-candy-pink fun fur. The beautifully constructed and softly furred females command attention by their sheer presence: six statuesque, evenly matched babes all possessing gleaming glass eyes and other taxidermic accouterments including wet-looking black nostrils, pointed claws and pink tongues slipped between jaws revealing sharp white teeth. Fiercely animalistic, they look like they could easily take a swipe or a bite out of one another, but instead allude to secret Sapphic pleasures ahead. (Garnet 2009, 14)

The second is from an essay by Josephine Mills in the same catalogue:

And they did look lovely, with their majestic and combination of almost-natural colours in the assortment of fun fur used by the artist. However, lovely is not the first thought that comes to mind on seeing them, and Mitchell's titling them as "lady" is clearly ironic. The creatures display many aspects that would never be seen on a "lady": an abundance of body hair; vicious fangs and claws; rows of generously sized nipples surrounded by additional tufts of fur; huge sumptuous butts; and prominent, engorged vulvas. (Mills 2009, 20)

Ladies Sasquatch is part of Mitchell's *Deep Lez* project, a series of art works

(re)appropriating public space for radical lesbian experience and identity.

My fourth case is *Etat d'urgence*, a 5-day cultural festival for the homeless in Montreal created by Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable (ATSA), the working name adopted by Quebec artists Annie Roy and Pierre Allard. The festival was conceived after a project in 1998, went slightly awry. *Etat d'urgence* (or 'State of Emergency') was originally conceived as a symbolic and yet functional refugee camp in downtown Montreal, created to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The Canadian Armed Forces helped build the original installation, and Montreal residents were invited to experience what it might be like to live in a refugee camp. To ATSA's surprise, the camp was overtaken by homeless people, and "the event thus graduate[d] from a symbolic concept to a concrete manifestation" (Pelletier 2008). ATSA decided to recreate the camp annually.

In 2010 (the year that I focused on for this research), the name and theme given to the festival was "Tout-inclus". The event was created in a central downtown park in mid-December. Large tents were erected for preparing and serving food, providing accom-

modation for hundreds of people at a time, for dispensing clothing, for providing medical services, for coffee and sandwiches available 24 hours for the duration of the festival, for crafts and art workshops led by local artists, for art exhibitions including murals and sculpture, a large performance stage — and in-keeping with the theme — a shuffle board and faux swimming pool complete with poolside lounge chairs. The 5-day festival involved upwards of 300 volunteers (including volunteers from the general public and homeless volunteers) and was visited by between 9,000 and 13,000 people. Hundreds of homeless people live at the camp and have access to shelter, three hot meals daily, haircuts, medical services and psychological counseling. Thousands of dollars worth of high quality outdoor clothing is given away by corporate sponsors such as Mountain Equipment Coop. And those who attend the camp are entertained by a roster of well-known performers on an outdoor stage. The event was funded by grants from various levels of government. I interviewed founding artist and Executive Director of ATSA, Annie Roy.

Each of these cultural producers, in one way or another, engages with public understandings – about capitalism and democracy, post-industrial malaise in Windsor, lesbian identity politics and homelessness in Montreal. Each asserts an understanding of social relations (contrary to what they perceive as the dominant understanding) grounded in their own notions of trust, what I am referring to as a ‘subjective integrity’. Subjective integrities reflect relations of power just as they (re)create them through the assignment of status functions, status characteristics, and other deontological attributes without which language would struggle for meaning. Subjective integrities express structures of legitimacy; in the cases in this study, they express legitimacies that challenge, undermine, resist or protest against a dominant structure of legitimacy of some sort. The manifestation

of structures of legitimacy, those asserted and those encountered in the assertions, are distributed through expectations of audience — those groups to whom an appeal of meaning is made. These tensions of legitimacy play out through legibilities, credibilities and appropriatenesses manifest through aesthetics of ambiguity, aesthetics of apprehension, aesthetics of exemplaries and aesthetics of identity. The ensuing analysis will describe the aesthetic tactics engaged in the texts in question.

My analysis will proceed as follows. In Chapter 5, I consider the ‘subjective integrities’ being asserted in each case; these are reflected in the authors/creators perceptions of the role of “truth” in their texts and who they expect to understand their texts. From the discussion, it becomes evident that a traditional analysis of “truth” rooted in empirical evidence and rational argumentation alone is inadequate to the task of understanding the complications of meaning and power at play in these examples of dissent.

In Chapters 6 & 7, I then consider the aesthetic tactics and how they are used in various texts. In Chapter 6, I focus on the representational aspects of communication, i.e. techniques related to content and meaning: the aesthetics of ‘modes of apprehension’ and the aesthetics of ambiguity. In Chapter 7, I focus on the relational aspects of communication (i.e. how communicative events create, reinforce and destabilize relationships): the aesthetics of identity and the aesthetics of exemplary validities. In the interests of clarity and efficiency, for each case I have limited my analysis to the two strongest examples; but all of the cases display all of the aesthetic tactics in varying degrees, a topic to which I will return in my conclusion.

CHAPTER 5 – Case Studies: Competing Structures of Legitimacy

To recap my earlier discussion, one approach to communication is to consider how social expectations, obligations and commitments are sedimented through patterns of trust arrived at through sustained effort to achieve integrity, or harmony, between those experiences and the world we encounter. The world encountered is organized by competing structures of power. Bridging the credible past and appropriate future requires navigating the *visible* expectations, obligations and commitments of relationships of power (i.e. the integrities intent on controlling our possibilities of action). The integrities of power can only be accepted, adopted and acquiesced to if its expectations, obligations and commitments are visible, which in turn depends on their legitimacy. Or in other words, our possibilities for action cannot be structured by commitments, obligations or expectations that we neither know about nor accept. Our acceptance of the expectations, obligations and commitments that maintain or extend relations of power is the effect of power.

When authors/creators make public truth-claims, they make commitments to patterns of trust with linguistic choices. These patterns express aspects of integrities which encompass the commitments, obligations and expectations necessary for the production of meaning. Truth-claims demand that we bridge our ontological integrities with the conditions of legitimacy organized by power. In Western cultural terms – certainly as reflected in the practices of traditional professional journalism - in its broadest sense, “truth” emerges from a process of rational argumentation and empirical evidence, which is an expression of contours of integrities that ground (Western) extant relations of pow-

er. Inherent within conditions of communication (which we can describe as a public expectation of understanding between at least one subjectivity and another) are attributes of experience that are rationally ambiguous and yet are neither false nor folly. This category of rationally ambiguous and yet meaningful experience is what makes up, again in its broadest sense, what I am calling the aesthetic.

More specifically, truth-claims engage their participants in experiences of differing modes of apprehension, ambiguity, social identity and expressions of desire, belief and commitment to exemplary states-of-affairs in the world – all of which, as discussed, generally elude the criteria for empirical, rational legitimacy. The dynamics and tensions between these aesthetic experiences and integrities of power are one of the ways that power structures its discursive interests. Subjugated knowledges are regulated and relegated by relations of power to subjugated status in part through aesthetic means; conversely, it is through these same tensions that conditions of possibility for power can be transcended and through which subjugated experiences can emerge into legitimate forms.

I have selected four sites of cultural production that, like journalism, address wide publics, comment on “truth”, and do not want to deceive their audiences. These cases are also in some way attempting to challenge elements of existing relations of power. Each has been chosen because of the difficulties presented in their texts to traditional notions of objective “truth” and because of their apparent aesthetic complexity. In the remainder of this chapter, I will consider the participants own views on the role of “truth” in their work, and I will assess the structures of legitimacy at play in each text — the integrities being asserted by cultural producers and the integrities they encounter (manifest in response to expected audiences) in the production of cultural meanings.

All of the participants in my research, one way or another, acknowledged a complicated relationship with “truth” in their cultural work. Some denied having a relationship with truth at all, but none wanted to be known as “liars” indicating a foundation of integrity rooted in some kind of expectation of being able to make a truth-claim. An expected audience presents a structure of legitimacy to be encountered; that is, the parameters within which meaning must manifest in order to be legitimate. The magic, so to speak, is in rejecting the legitimacy of the relations of domination while asserting alternative structures of legitimacy. It is a conundrum, but one reflected in the attributes of aesthetic experience which remain meaningful despite their rationally ambiguous status. Each cultural producer is asserting a structure of legitimacy that reflects relations other than those that produce legitimacy for domination of one kind or another. They navigate these epistemically tight spaces using aesthetic tactics — to assert legitimacies in some cases, and in others to challenge legitimacies of power.

The Dominion

In terms of the role of “truth” in its cultural work, *The Dominion* was established with the express intent to mimic traditional forms of journalism:

From the very beginning the idea behind Dominion was that it would be a challenge to national newspapers, a challenge to the Globe and Mail and National Post eventually, and it’s clearly not that now, but that kind of style has stuck with it being a very news kind of warranted style ... (McSorley 55).

When you present yourself as a newspaper, as we do in our mast head, then that label conveys this idea that what we are presenting is true ... (McSorley 38)

“Truth” for *The Dominion*, like its mainstream counterparts, is tied to procedures of veri-

fiction: sources, research, interviews and “being able to see where the numbers come from” (McSorley 38). Photographs are used primarily for evidentiary purposes and to establish the accuracy of their reports (McSorley 23).

And yet, there remains a skepticism about “truth” in any absolute sense. *The Dominion* is not striving to represent ‘the’ truth, but rather a version of it that is reliable enough for its readers to base decisions on (McSorley 34-5):

I don’t believe in the objectivity of the media, I don’t believe in the objectivity of writers, and so I don’t really think that we can be presenting an ultimate form of truth, but I think that the idea of our media is that it does present some form of truth, some form of information that people can base their decisions off of on a daily basis. And so I think it’s important that we keep that in mind, that when people are reading that’s how they see it. Even if we don’t necessarily believe that what we’re writing is the ultimate truth, we still keep in mind the idea of accuracy, of fairness, of fact checking, of making sure that even if we recognize that every single article written by an author comes from some form of bias and interest and there’s always something left out and something put in, and you can never completely count for that — that people turn to the news for some form of truth about the world they’re living in, and that’s what motivates us too, like I don’t think any of us would be a hundred percent honest, if we weren’t saying that in some ways we are presenting what we view as a version of the truth in the world of what’s going on in our daily lives ... I think how we view the idea of truth is incredibly important to what we do, and we have a duty and obligation to our readership to keep that in mind ...

As a social justice magazine obviously we have an angle and a world view that we’re adopting and so that complicates it too — clearly — but, you know, I think that corporate media has their own kind of mandate as to what it is that they’re trying to accomplish and that complicates what they’re doing too. But we don’t unduly attack people — we’re critical, but it’s grounded in some kind of information and accuracy that we’re trying to present ... I guess it’s an issue of not willingly misrepresenting people or topics ...

In issue # 68, the editorial titled “Uprooting the G8 and G20” (“Uprooting”) identifies *The Dominion* as “democratic media” and sets out some of their obligations and commitments as such — for example, to be “honest about the world’s stark inequalities

and accountable to those who bear its burdens” (Dominion 2010, 3). The editorial lauds its growing network of independent media coops whose reporting is “attracting millions of online readers” to “stories that share the perspectives of the many, not the few – stories written in the newsrooms of the grassroots.” There is an expressly stated bottom-up structure of accountability and legitimacy being asserted within an existing pattern of social relationships explicitly identified as organizing society's benefits from the top down.

The Dominion operates within a field of obligations: in relation to their methods of verification and accuracy; in relation to a sense of fairness to those they write about; and in relation to a sense of needing to be transparent to their readership and to label factual uncertainty when it arises in their work (i.e. for example, if they are unsure whether or not some event has actually occurred). The first is perhaps the most important, and in a sense necessitates the others:

I think the idea of truth is incredibly important to what we do ... I think we do have some kind of duty and obligation to our readership in the work that we're doing of trying to be as accurate as possible - trying to be fair, even though I have problems defining what fair is and what it means. But I think if you can't be completely objective and truthful and present some kind of ultimate you know, factually based reality, then to make sure that what you can empirically prove and present, that that's correct and accurate, and that when you're looking at an issue that you're not willingly misrepresenting people or topics. (McSorley, 35-36)

We try to verify as much as we can .. and having people who are trustworthy on the ground doing our reporting, like we do a lot of coverage of Canadian mining companies involved in human rights abuse. And we've yet to come across a situation where it's been outright wrong ... [Verification means using] multiple sources to make sure that is somebody says a massacre happened at this particular place that its not just one person saying this happened, that there's other people that can verify it. (McSorley, 37).

It's the responsibility of the journalist and editors, if there's any questions, to do

the research and to make sure that the information being presented is the most accurate that we can get at. I think that the truthfulness or the accuracy is often represented in how you tell the story and a lot of it is based on interviews, based on research, being able to see where numbers come from, being able to cite sources.
(McSorley, 38)

The obligation to be accurate for *The Dominion* is inextricable from this commitment to fairness which in turn influences *The Dominion's* methodological choices — for example, in their choice of sources, but also in how facts are handled. To be clear, for my purposes it is not a question of whether or not *The Dominion* is actually fair, but rather recognition that the goal of fairness necessitates kinds of procedures and conventions. For example, according to McSorley, *The Dominion* strives to avoid the unfairness of cynically omitting certain facts to suit political goals.

In its selection of sources, *The Dominion* asserts integrities somewhat different from other and more mainstream news organizations. *The Dominion* emphasizes among its sources first-hand accounts from those who experience suffering, loss, deprivation and subjugation within existing relations of power and domination. For example, in Issue #68, the organizational sources in articles include: No One Is Illegal, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, Toronto Community Mobilization Network, Secwepeme Nation, Immigrant Workers Center, Indigenous Environmental Network, Amnesty International, Defenders of the Land, Corporate Watch, Rights Action, UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, UN Special Rapporteur on Toxic Waste and Products. *The Dominion* includes sources with opposing points of view (the articles also quote Minister of Immigration, the Fraser Institute, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs

and International Trade, the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada), but it is the use of sources with subjugated voices trying to organize knowledge about resisting the effects of power that presents genealogical tensions. These are experiences of not being able to influence policy or policy-makers; of not having access to the wealth being generated by various economic activities; of experiencing detrimental outcomes from industrial development, economic growth and international trade; of in some instances not having even the basic legal protections of citizenship. These sources are first-hand witnesses to kinds of experience that cast doubt on the legitimacy of certain kinds of social relationships — according to *The Dominion*, those that reinforce liberal democracies, the global economic systems of capitalism, and legacies of colonialism. They are experiences which, because they draw attention to the failings of dominant modes of social organization, they are routinely ignored, considered irrelevant and ridiculed in mainstream news sources (Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980; Glasgow University Media Group 1976; Howley 2004; McChesney 2004; Rodriguez 2001).

Another important element of legitimacy being asserted by *The Dominion* are expectations about audiences. *The Dominion's* editors expect their audiences to reject certain kinds of experience as inappropriate, illegitimate and unacceptable (an expectation shaped by certain exemplary states, a discussion I will return to shortly), and then to act to ensure that future social conditions do not reflect the problems identified. For example, in “Uprooting”, they write:

The articles in this issue, we hope, offer reasons to become angry and inspired. Join us in the assemblies and meeting halls and teaching spaces of

the Toronto counter-summits, and join us in the streets. (Dominion 2010, 3)

An expectation of civic engagement only makes sense where political and social structures are malleable and where they are responsive (or at least can be altered) through political participation by the general public. In the article on human migration, the author writes:

The G20 protests this Spring are attracting a wide variety of community members ... “We have been having and continue to host community forums in 15 migrant neighbourhoods in the months leading up to the G20 ... People want to talk about status, and about labour standards, about the world that they want to live in” (Maynard 2010).

In an article about Canadian diplomacy in connection with allegations of human rights abuses by Canadian mining companies, the author ends the article with a quote from a representative of Rights Action, a non-governmental organization (NGO):

“With respect to reforming Canada's criminal code [sic] so that corporations and their directors could be brought to trial for criminal actions in their corporate activities in 'developing countries’”, he added, “no one in Canada has taken up this challenge.” (Saunders 2010)

In an article about protest movements learning from histories of protest, the author quotes a representative of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP):

In Scott's experience, “The most powerful relationships are built right on the streets. Many of these groups have been to each other's demos, but have never called one another.” What comes of those relationships can only be told, fought over and evaluated and the days, weeks and months following what promises to be a memorable week in June. (Woolnough and Heinrichs 2010)

The expectations are that people want to get involved, that they are getting involved, that they want to know strategically what steps to take to achieve political outcomes, that they want to build “powerful relations” and they will in all likelihood be on the street or at

least open to the prospect.

These integrities – the expectations, obligations and commitments by *The Dominion* and towards expected readerships -- lie at the heart of *The Dominion's* dissenting work. They are conceiving and constituting audiences through acts of understanding rooted in structures of appropriateness that include expectations about political participation and injustice.¹¹ But they are also addressing a public whose understandings about democracy, capitalism and economics in all likelihood reflect the expectations of elite experts and decision-makers. From its inception, *The Dominion* was making a bid for wide readerships from Canada's general public and not only more narrowly construed activist communities. In making their assertions of integrity, the creators of *The Dominion* must encounter contrary structures of legitimacy that reflect those of mainstream audiences and why *The Dominion* has adopted the objective modes of apprehension found in mainstream news outlets. *The Dominion's* use of traditional procedures of verification and reliance on empirical models of factuality reflect sensitivity to dominant modes of understanding. *The Dominion's* stories are staked well within the realm of rational argumentation and empirical evidence. But even within these dominant modes of knowledge production there are aesthetic tactics in play that undermine the legitimacies of relations of domination:

... from the very beginning the idea was that *The Dominion* would take on this the

11 One assumes, for example, that the policing community (who in yet another of the articles in Issue #68, "Elite Insecurity", state that they monitor publications like *The Dominion*) would derive very different understandings from articles in *The Dominion*, perhaps within frameworks of surveillance and law enforcement.

same style and format as mainstream newspapers as a way of in some ways subverting it. And it's interesting, because I don't think anyone would really - even myself, I wouldn't necessarily - say that the goal of *The Dominion* is to subvert mainstream media, but in some ways it is by adopting -- and I think that was the idea at the beginning -- by adopting a similar style, layout, format to mainstream media, but inherently publishing stories and interviewing sources and people and basically covering topics that either aren't covered or covering them in a such a way that they're different from what's being covered in the mainstream media. The idea is to use that style but to show that it doesn't need to be only government sources and typical mainstream news sources that are interviewed and that are covered in that format ... I think in some ways there is this idea of subverting the style of mainstream media and using that to tell stories that you wouldn't necessarily find in a Globe and Mail and National Post or Gazette.

It is, genealogically speaking, a tiny dance floor. On the one hand, much of what appears in the pages of *The Dominion* is aggressively critical of the status quo and of existing relations of power:

I think that inherently the idea behind *The Dominion*, and I guess a lot of non-factional alternative media, is that there's an inherent critique of the power structures of society, whether or not it's the money or business class or the government institutions, but that something needs to change. (McSorley, 59)

Our whole, the whole reason for this project is to challenge power structures in society. So I think it's a pretty driving, pretty important driving force behind it. (McSorley, 64)

On the other hand, they also rely on the same attributions of credibility that reflect these structures of power and that are similarly employed in mainstream news contexts:

I think that media in itself -- even though, if you really press people, I think people would be very skeptical that media is truthful -- but the idea of our media is that it does present some form of truth, some of form of information that people can base their decisions off of [on] a daily basis. [McSorley, 35]

What is at stake in the pages of *The Dominion*, as indicated in the above quote, is a sense of "truth" that people can base action on — a position that recalls the observations of

McKinzie (1994) that among his respondents, and despite an intellectual acceptance of the contingency of “truth”, there was a need for the stability and coherence of absolute truths on which to base their day-to-day actions and decisions:

And so I think it’s important that we keep that in mind, that when people are reading what we are representing that, that’s how they see it. And that even if we don’t necessarily believe that what we’re writing is the ultimate truth, we still keep in mind ideas like accuracy of - fairness of - of fact checking - of making sure that even if we recognize that every single article written by an author comes from some form of bias and interest, and there’s always something left out and something put in, and you can never completely account for that, that people turn to the news for some form of truth about the world they’re living in, and that’s what motivates us too. (McSorley, 35)

It is a difficult tension that runs to the very core of the epistemological assertions being made by *The Dominion* and the doubts raised in wider cultural circles about both the legitimacy of such assertions and the legitimacy of the systems that produce such effects.

It is a tension that *The Dominion* ultimately navigates through aesthetics — in particular (and as I will describe in detail in chapters six and seven), through the complexity of modes of apprehension at play in the production of meanings in its stories, and through the framework of exemplary validities manifest in the relationships between *The Dominion* and its expected audiences.

Broken City Lab (BCL)

The members of *Broken City Lab*, even among themselves, had contradictory positions on the “truth” qualities of their work. Answers to questions concerning the importance of truth in BCL’s work ranged from “not at all” to “yeah absolutely”, which might suggest incoherence, but as I hope will become clear demonstrates rather some of

the difficulties of engaging in the production of public knowledge that challenges dominant understandings. One respondent suggested that “direction” was a better word than “truth” to describe the orientation of BCL’s cultural work (Langois, 27). All of the respondents agreed that BCL’s cultural interventions challenge narratives about the city of Windsor, narratives that disparage the city, that encourage young people to leave, that suggest limited opportunity, and that discredit the value of public opinion in shaping Windsor’s future. BCL is interested in “how truths inform locality” and “how locality is shaped”:

It’s easy to be somewhere and be there, but much different to actively be in a place and be aware that where you are is constantly being shifted. And so truth being embedded in that comes down to wanting to figure out which of these grand narratives that has been circulating about the city still do have some validity and which are close to being toppled over, which are constantly being negotiated on a day to day basis. (Langois, 7)

Which helps to explain why another member might suggest that truth “absolutely” plays a role in the cultural texts/interventions generated by BCL:

All of the work that we do as a social commentary and reflects what we think is the truth about the city and the way in which we think the city should be perceived. Because in a lot of ways, we feel like the city gets a bad reputation through the media ... But people who don’t really take the time to engage with the city, don’t understand the greatness that’s here in Windsor. So, in terms of truth, we’re really trying to bring that out into the public and trying to get people to understand what’s happening here, how the city can be utilized and how it could be a great city if people just gave it a chance. (Naccarato, 16)

But even this respondent suggested later in the interview that “nothing we do is fact. It’s based on our own subjectivity. But we feel that’s the truth, we feel that what we’re displaying is our own truth” (Naccarato). Another respondent had no hesitation in describing BCL’s work as made up: “A lot of what we’re doing is imagining how things could be

different and imagining new stories for the city and new ways to think about the city, so I think that sometimes requires blatant lies” (Soulliere). But here again, “truth” in the work is not abandoned altogether. This respondent also expressed the importance of honesty and of being genuine in their cultural work, and that BCL did not want to be perceived as liars by the community.

In a particularly insightful response, one respondent located the “validity” of truth in “how we come to understand what something is through unpackaging it rather than taking it for granted” (Langois). It brings to mind the difference between Heidegger's “primordial understanding” and “conspicuous truth” discussed earlier in the context of McKenzie’s work and the way his respondents had two understandings of truth, one absolute and sedimented through life experience, and the other intellectually as a way to confront circumstances that defy expectations. Key to this sensibility is an expectation that audiences will get more involved in taking responsibility for Windsor's future:

I want to feel like other people are invested in this place because I am invested in this place, and I know that I get something out of that, so I'm assuming that other people would get something intrinsically valuable out of that ... If more people are doing more things that are informed by actively thinking about how to be in a place, then I think ultimately my neighbourhood will be better for it. (Langois[2], 1-2)

In some ways the problem and best thing about Windsor is its size and with that size can come heavy senses of obligation to do things because sometimes you are only one of a few people doing that thing. It's like, if you're not going to do it, then who will, right? ... (Langois, 1, 17)

I am interested in how our work might act as a prompt for someone to get curious about something in front of them, because our work is about things that make us curious in front of ourselves. (Langois[1], 12)

If I'm ultimately interested in seeing more things happening around me and other people doing things, then I want to help provoke that as much as possible (Langois [1], 22).

It is an obligation derived from their own sense of being residents of Windsor, which also informs an obligation of leadership:

Because we're all from here and because we all care about what happens here, we're not doing it for anything other than the city itself. We're not doing it for money or fame or, you know, to get our names out there. We're doing it because we actually want to see these things happen and we actually care about what happens here. (Soulliere, 26)

Obligation is a funny word, but I think it can be useful because maybe we should have a sense of obligation about a community or about a place and being active in it. Maybe it would be interesting to consider if everyone had an obligation to do something at a scale that was appropriate to them that would change at least how they experience the city. It might be a lot of community gardens and poorly painted safety signs, but maybe the people who did that would feel empowered and that would be very helpful to communities. Obligation in that sense becomes important. (Langois[1], 21).

We do have a little bit of responsibility in the city of Windsor to lead a specific conversation on what's going on right now about laws, infrastructure and what's going to happen in the next 10 years in our city.

As artists, their obligations and commitments shift away from the political, at least “political” as it might apply to activist rather than artistic work. The members of BCL believe that being perceived as “activists” would undermine their legitimacy.¹² Identifying as artists allows the group a flexibility in how they respond to problems (Langois); informs their inclination towards “wholistic thinking” (Langois); grounds their

12 In 2008, there was a city-wide strike in Windsor which polarized the electorate both for and against local unions, but particularly against. BCL's goal from the beginning has been to try to avoid getting on anyone's “bad side”, to avoid being “rude” or attacking local political figures, and to avoid being seen as “nay-sayers or negative individuals who are causing a ruckus” (Soulliere, 7). This is especially evident in projects like Text-In-Transit which was only possible in partnership with the local transit authority, and in the billboard campaign of Save Our City, the original message for which was changed at the behest of the billboard company (the company demanded that BCL include a url for their website in order to make sense of the message as “advertising”).

emphasis on ideas, dialogue and getting people to think, rather than telling them what to think (Langois, Naccarrato); informs their emphasis on solutions over problems (Langois); and helps to justify the importance of subjective experience underlying their cultural work (Soulliere).

These expectations, obligations and commitments embody sensibilities that challenge who has the legitimacy to speak publicly on issues of concern in Windsor – who is allowed to identify Windsor's problems and articulate solutions, whose opinions about the future of Windsor count. There is in every BCL cultural intervention the implicit assertion of credibility: *Text-in-transit* puts enigmatic messages in busses; *Sites of Apology and Hope* makes public designations about and gives awards to places; *Cross Border Communication* asserts the authority to speak on behalf of Windsor to another city in another country; and *Make This Better* asserts the authority to physical place objects in public space, and to make demands (to “make this better”) on the public. And implicitly there are assertions of credibility to engage and mobilize citizen involvement, and to make policy recommendations. The boot-strapping ontological qualities of John Searle's status functions are clearly at work, here. BCL is encouraging and expecting Windsor's residents to get involved in shaping Windsor's future by doing just that themselves.

We've talked about our audience in depth a few times and for me personally, the first audience is always myself. At the end of the day that's why I do this, it's for myself. *So, I mean, I feel like I'm emancipated by doing this, right?* That it's me first of all, and then second of all, it's not in this order per se, it's so nice it changes, but the art community would be the audience, and then the other audiences are the general [public], especially for text and transit and stuff that's in the city for people to see. (Soulliere, 8)

BCL creates cultural texts that attempt to build links between different audiences, in effect to instantiate a sense of belonging among disparate groups within a wider Windsor community, and this desire to bring people together guides notions of appropriateness.

Text-in-transit expects public transit users; *Site of Apology ...*, *Cross Border Communication*, and *Makes This Better* all expect general publics who will encounter their interventions randomly in the streets of Windsor.

BCL's notions of 'appropriate' exclude anything violent or damaging to property, anything polarizing, rudeness and meanness (Soulliere, Langois), just as they try not to alienate audiences by being too academic, intellectual or "arty":

We're making it accessible to all audiences ... We don't want to offend people ... we want to create positive ideas around the city (Naccarrato, 16)

We're not going to say the mayor sucks because then our name is attached to the fact that we don't like the mayor. It's all about not burning bridges, it's about making them ... There's people that like the mayor, he got re-elected ... There's no way we ever want to eliminate anyone from being an audience. (Soulliere, 21)

We're not trying to do anything inherently mean, because I don't see how that's really going to do much. I don't want to suggest that protest or activists doing angry things is necessarily mean, but if we projected "this place sucks" or "this place is the worst", it would provoke reactions and in some ways it might provoke more conversations, but there's so many nuances, so many little bits and pieces that construct a place, an experience of place, there's so much material, that I don't think there's a reason to go all the way to the edge of these issues, and really polarize them... (Langois [1], 14)

We don't want to, we don't really want to destroy anything. We just want to get in there and shift it a bit. So we don't have to destroy, we don't want to completely demolish the systems that are already set up, right. We're trying to, instead of destroying and starting fresh, we're just trying to work with what we already have and build upon it. (Soulliere, 27)

This notion of positivity is an important dimension of appropriateness at work in BCL's cultural work. It is in a sense the central means by which BCL navigates the complex

structures of legitimacy that could otherwise ridicule and reject their contributions to public meaning (Langois 1, 15):

In my personal experience I've just found it easier to push the change that I want to see by approaching things really positively ... But a lot of times people with the authority to allow you to do something really like the positive things, too, its kind of like playing both sides.

It is also part of an understated tactic of shifting legitimacies:

We do want to be taken seriously ... we don't want to be seen like graffiti naysayers, negative individuals who are causing a ruckus ... we decided we would infiltrate from underneath, not say anything too negative at first ... don't get on anyone's bad side at first ... Once that's established, then you can start to be more critical of things (Soulliere, 5-6).

The level of appropriateness is contingent on the situation at hand. If we projected swear words, it would maybe look inappropriate to some people, and other people might argue that it's a very appropriate response. But ultimately to be able to do the next thing that we want to do without knowing what that is ... We kind of negotiate what we view as appropriate ... by values that are larger than just the people [BCL artists] around the table (Langois 2, 10).

Navigating these kinds of boundaries of appropriateness (with political and corporate agencies) only makes acute what is in fact happening in all three settings (the art world, with the greater public, and officialdom): the difficulty of determining at what point negotiating integrity either destabilizes relations of power or becomes a capitulation to them. The answer to which, of course, is the subject of this dissertation and will hopefully become clearer in the ensuing analysis of aesthetic tactics. To be clear, I am not suggesting that BCL is cynically adopting one set of legitimacies or another – nor am I suggesting this for any of the other cultural creators considered in this study. In fact, I am suggesting just the opposite, that they are successfully navigating competing legitimacies — artistic, civic, legal, academic, popular — in such a way as to assert “truths” that emerge

from relations that resist the effects of power. And as I will assess in greater detail in the ensuing chapters, *Broken City Lab* does this primarily through the tactical use of an aesthetics of ambiguity and aesthetics of identity.

Allyson Mitchell's *Ladies Sasquatch*

What attracted my attention to this sculpture *ex post facto* of its exhibition was an artist talk given by Mitchell at the 2010 AGM for the Independent Media Arts Alliance). She described resistance she encountered at the Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG) to her work. According to Mitchell, *Ladies Sasquatch* was originally curated for the central foyer at the main entrance to the WAG, a highly visible and prestigious location. The director of the gallery changed, and a new director was reluctant to proceed with the exhibition in the planned location. Mitchell had the distinct impression that the sculptures were being perceived as too sensational. In their new location -- a much smaller room deep in the gallery and shared with another exhibit -- the WAG's concerns were whittled to the angle of one the lady sasquatch's naked butt and vulva: the curator didn't want it facing the entrance to the room and threatened to cancel the show. Mitchell reluctantly agreed to make the change. What to my untrained eyes appears as an enchanting, playful and even spiritual display of artistic imagination and skill, apparently also holds within it something deeply troubling for some.

Of course, *Ladies Sasquatch* does harbour troubling knowledge – troubling, that is, for patriarchal and heteronormative relations of power, and it does so by constituting

political lesbian identity in public forms. It is an identity in Mitchell's view that is largely absent from mainstream and popular cultures because of how it challenges popular norms (of race, body size, ability, sexuality, strength, autonomy, etc.) of female identity. Radical political lesbian identity challenges fundamental "truths" about gender in dominant culture. In Mitchell's work, these competing "truths" collide (Mitchell, 11-12):

... a truth about hetero-normativity in relation to hetero-sexuality in relation to hetero-normative hetero-sexuality in relation to whiteness, small able bodies thinness -- the Sasquatches undo that big capital T truth about those being the only kinds of bodies that exist, which you see on television, right, and shows different kinds of bodies that are racialized, that are not even fully human but are animal-human hybrids, that are fat, that have big butts and are sexualized, but not within the traditional way where you're used to seeing sexualized, feminized bodies through a patriarchal lens.

They're [the sasquatches] also not objects in a way that a single naked female body becomes subjectified - which is a truth - but they're in a collective, they're several of them together, they're not even just a couple like an acceptable man and woman or a lesbian married couple. They are an untraditional family, they're uncomfortably more than three or four of them, you know, there's a critical mass of them that undoes a truth around family, women's bodies, sexuality, race.

But this other truth is being told through a mythological creature, there's an untruth in that too, if truth is about scientific proof, or long understood ideologies, then there is no truth that the Sasquatches exist according to lots of people. But then according to lots of people who are specialists in that field of crypto-zoology, they do exist, or within world views of lots of indigenous people, they do exist or the possibilities for them do exist. So, it's like a tangle of truths and untruths pulled into the ideas.

A hetero-normative, male-dominated hegemony encounters lesbian culture in the size and shape of female "beauty", in the challenge to traditional family structures implicit in sexualized female collectives, in the challenge to science implicit in the crypto-zoology of Sasquatches, in the challenge to colonial legacies implicit in the valorization of Aboriginal mythology. All of these structures of legitimacy are competing for attention in Mitch-

ell's work. It is not, as she says, a mainstream version of "truth" (Mitchell 3):

... It's a truth that's not a patriarchal understanding of what truths are, or imperialist ideas of what truths are, but a post-modern and feminist messing around of what ideas of the truth are. So telling a particular truth that I would recognize can always shift and change, it's not written in stone; I even wrote a manifesto about the ideas and aesthetics behind my work, but I wrote it as a way of marking that all truths come out of a kind of a subjectivity, and that truth can shift and change. So when you write something down or when you make something into an object, the truth that went into the making of, or the writing, or the words can shift and you may not stand behind it in the same way that you always did when it was fabricated.

In the same way, Sasquatches themselves are unstable signifiers, untrue in a scientific sense, but mythologically rooted in belief systems. (In Winnipeg, Mitchell was invited to participate in a panel discussion about the cultural importance of Sasquatch to Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal knowledge and colonialism by an organization called APES, Aboriginal People Excited about Sasquatches; while the sculpture was at the WAG, a group of young Aboriginal mothers-to-be started using the room where *Ladies Sasquatch* was exhibited as a gathering place for regular meetings to share experiences and discuss their lives). Mitchell describes *Ladies Sasquatch* as a "tangle of truths and untruths", which suggests something about the competing structures of legitimacy at play in her cultural work (Mitchell, 12).

This unstable structure of meaning reflects her approach to the subjugated experiences she wants to give visibility to culturally. "I want to make work that forces people to look at what they want to look away from" she explains (Mitchell, 5). Mitchell is responding to a dominant culture that does not want to see queerness and queer sexuality. "My work is about making counter-publics" (Mitchell, 20). In terms of sexuality, she

says “I need to walk this fine line between sexualized femininity and empowered sexualized femininity” (Mitchell, 18). Mitchell’s *Ladies Sasquatch* is asserting cultural experiences that she perceives as absent from public culture, and not only absent, but to which dominant culture responds with hostility.

Mitchell identifies four audiences she had in mind when creating *Ladies Sasquatch* that helps to identify the competing structures of legitimacy at play in her work: (i) herself as an artist (“I have my own affective response to the work ... because to me it’s amazing, that’s how I know it’s appropriate” (Mitchell, 27)); (ii) a “younger version” of herself as a young politicized lesbian; (iii) her parents, small town folks, rural conservative audiences; and (iv) feminist audiences. Each audience suggests its own integrity: “It’s like a play between making people comfortable and uncomfortable simultaneously in large groups of people from super-conservative homophobes to totally political riot girls” (Mitchell, 14). Mitchell is particularly concerned with not “erasing audiences” by which she means ignoring aspects of legitimacy for particular groups (the example she gives is wanting to include race as an element of meaning in *Ladies Sasquatch* so as not to render *Ladies Sasquatch* irrelevant to women of colour).

Within this array of audiences, she is aware of the credibilities that accrue by having her work exhibited in cultural institutions: “there’s something that happens with the work moving through museums and galleries, teaching people that this is legitimate” (Mitchell, 16). But she is equally concerned with not narrowing her audiences by relying too heavily or expressly on academic and scholarly legitimacies which she describes as

the “horrible foreignness and coldness of academic theory” (Mitchell, 10). Her bid is for wide audiences, both scholarly and non-scholarly, both feminist (to whom she feels an obligation) and “super-conservative”, both radical lesbian and like her parents. The credibility of institutional acceptance allows *Ladies Sasquatch* access to some of these wider audiences, and it provides a platform of credibility where members of the general public have an opportunity to see what they and dominant culture would rather look away from.

One of the ways Mitchell anticipates this looking / looking away is by using tactics in her work to entice bodies to stay with the sculpture, to expand in a sense the embodied presence of audiences with the work.¹³ She cites an unsourced statistic that most gallery patrons spend on average 2-3 seconds with each art work in a gallery, a rate of lingering she actively tries to extend by encouraging physical interaction. Patrons are encouraged to touch *Ladies Sasquatch*, and to join the sasquatches on the platform, something Mitchell says according to the galleries where it has shown, that children are often eager to do.

In summary, *Ladies Sasquatch* undermines the legibilities of patriarchal exclusions while asserting the appropriateness and, in the gallery circumstances, the legitimacies of radical lesbian identity in public culture. As I will discuss in more detail later on, key to her aesthetic tactics are an ambiguity of legibilities – in terms of lesbian, patriarchal, artistic sensibilities – while inviting audiences to share in what is ultimately a sense

13 In another sculpture, titled the *Hungry Purse; or Vagina Dentata in Late Capitalism*, she invites audiences to crawl into a tent reminiscent of blankets forts made by children, where patrons can relax on comfy seating and watch her video work. Again, the structure of the sculpture encourages extended exposure.

of belonging within a radical lesbian collective identity.

ATSA: Etat d'urgence

On the one hand, ATSA denies making “truth” claims of any kind, preferring instead to ground their sense of reality in doubt (Roy 6):

I don't think there is truth because we're not saying [or] ... seeing each other as saviours. I think questioning is the truth. Doubting all the time is the truth. I think you're not in the truth when you think you are right all the time. The interesting part is when you're questioning, when you're going to the other person, when you're not blocking you're mind to understand another vision. This is the truth.

And yet, within the cultural work of *Etat d'urgence*, there is an explicit attempt to challenge dominant perceptions and beliefs about homelessness, homeless people and how society responds to those who live in the streets. Their approach is to artificially create a social setting where different kinds of “real” experiences can flourish for a brief time:

When we're thinking, talking about the truth, I'm maybe saying a truth but in a false world I create ... the “oeuvre d'art” is like a transposition, it's something that is there for a little moment.

What happens at *Etat d'urgence* happens out of the context of dominant social relations -- is extracted in a sense from the relations of power through which they are traditionally manifest – which allows a different proximity and sensibility to emerge:

Oh, it's a just a matter of focus. I'm just lifting it out ... not lifting it out; I'm just transposing it so you can see it as a separate object, that is maybe more approachable than reality.

By creating the opportunity for homeless people to exist in a setting removed from traditional social contexts, non-homeless people can encounter homeless individuals on different terms: as volunteers, as audience members sharing pleasure from the same

cultural experience, sharing meals, in a context where homeless people are the dominant influence on shared space. The “truths” that emerge will have the credibilities of the personal experiences of those who attended the event.

“Tout-inclus” (the 2012 theme) in English means “all-inclusive” and refers to vacation packages popular with many Quebecois (and Canadians): short holidays, usually to locations in the global south to escape the Canadian winter, and where everything including travel, accommodation, food and entertainment is provided for in one price. “Tout-inclus” in this case refers to a 'vacation' for the homeless population in Montreal. And it is a play on words because the homeless are of course excluded from places and benefits offered in mainstream society. In the global south, the all-inclusive vacation packages from the North similarly exclude impoverished local populations from the pleasures of the “all-included”, other than the benefits derived from those who work in the hotels and bars that serve foreign holidayers.

The homeless population in Montreal, as in most urban settings, is both visible and invisible. They are visible because they live on the street and we see them from our cars or we encounter homeless people on sidewalks, in parks, on public transportation and in other public settings. The homeless are invisible because there are in fact large populations of homeless living in most Canadian cities with a nationwide population over 150,000 (Laird 2007). There are also often social kinds of invisibility at play — the discomfort in witnessing the conditions of homelessness (being asked for change, having our windshields squeegeed, unpleasant smells, the sight of men and women eating from

garbage cans, begging, mental illness) that many turn away from; and in a larger policy sense, a tendency to ignore structural causes of and solutions for the conditions of homelessness (Casino and Jacoy 2008; Horsell 2006; Wright 1993).

According to Annie Roy, *Etat d'urgence* is a response to “indecentcy which was all around us, and trying to make waves in unconventional ways” (Pelletier 2008b, 15). It is a “mechanism for encounter and dialogue” that comes from “outrage” (16). ATSA wants to “incite people to experiment with their capacity for taking action” (16). Their expectation is that people can and will respond differently if the problem is presented in a different context. ATSA structures *Etat d'urgence* within expectations that the residents of Montreal will participate even if, or perhaps especially if, they are surprised or made to feel a little discomfort. They expect people to join in with the attendant homeless population, be affected by their experiences of participation, and as such to have the capacity for deep, meaningful psychological, intellectual and ethical transformation:

What’s interesting for me on a big scale is that it’s kind of a village, and that people live in different engagement in society on many levels. Some people ask themselves questions, some others don’t. And the camp is the same thing. Some people are there. They don’t really ask questions, how critical it is of the society, and some other people really do and are engaged in the intellectual side of it. (Roy, 16)

I think in the work we do we always want people to feel: okay, what’s my responsibility in there - you know - where I can go back home and do better ... Sometimes, if it can challenge someone in the way ... [for example] I was seeing myself in a certain way, but now I feel different. I go back home, *and I feel different about myself* and the way I do things. Or you know, I’m just full of energy and I was already maybe composting, but I just feel like I’m not alone doing it and okay, let’s go. [emphasis added] (Roy, 25)

The daunting visible reality of hundreds of the festival itself – of homeless people gathered together in a public place in all of their unrest and disarray – presents, at the very least, a highly unusual if not alarming situation for public officials and members of the public alike:

It's very political in that sense, that – oh boy you know, we have to think that in 2001, the city didn't want us to do it in the public park, you know. You don't want to see 300 homeless people gathered together, it's too much of a heavy image. (Roy, 20)

It's unreal, I mean okay, 300 people like that, okay, and for them, you realize that it's a happy time, that it's not like a crisis, it's kind of okay, aye, it's party time here, you know. But it's, it's not party, no. It's trash, it's not really nice. Especially in the morning when you wake up the guys you know and it smells really bad and it's really trash and blarh. (Roy, 34)

It is a social discomfort that challenges the legitimacy of both the invisibility of homeless populations and the invisibility of the issue of homelessness on the public agenda. The festival also brings homeless and non-homeless citizens together in a social and festive setting to share public space, entertainment, food, and to work together. It humanizes homeless people in the sense that it is harder to shun and ignore someone with whom you have laughed with, shared meals, talked to and worked with — an altogether different scenario than trying to avoid and ignore people who are often described in dominant culture as mentally ill, violent, addicted, and criminal (Meert et al. 2004). *Etat d'urgence* demonstrates through the “truth” of experience possibilities for other ways of responding both to the problem of homelessness and to homeless people themselves.

The festival engages with multiple structures of legitimacy. ATSA feels an obligation to respond to injustice with the same sense of outrage as “terrorism”, but to do

so in a socially acceptable way — through art and by committing to not hurt anyone or damage anything (Roy, 26). The notion of respect for all is integral to their work. ATSA expects that opportunities for transformation among participants — homeless and non-homeless alike — will arise if those invited to the festival are treated with respect, hospitality and caring (Roy, 20):

Well, you have to respect people. I mean of course I can understand, I kind of agree that when you want to say things and smash you know, sometimes there's gestures that are not socially acceptable that happen that are there to make a big point, you know. And that maybe media would not have talked about if you don't do it like that. But maybe that's why we choose art, because it's a civilized way to be angry .. I do not vandalize things. I create a violent object without smashing the window of a merchant who's doing the best in his life to make it, make his money, you know. I would not feel great to smash a window and not care about the person who's gonna arrive next day and see his place like totally wrecked. But I could, you know, make a false broken window ... You could say 'I would really love to smash that window, but I won't do it for real because I don't want to hurt that person. But I can make the idea of smashing really pertinent and strong so we can all see it anyway. But I'll stay civilized. (Roy, 28)

ATSA is addressing audiences in three unique ways: (i) as members of the public; (ii) as the homeless; and (iii) artistic communities. Members of the public will include “socially engaged people, people that are probably already aware of things and who want to do their part in changing the world”, and also a more mainstream and less politically aware aspects of the general public: “a certain audience that is just passing-by people, that are like asking themselves: oh, what is this, and — you know, they come by and then we have a conversation together and they stay for a while. It's new for them” (Roy 18). “Just passing by” audiences would reflect expectations about dominant cultural attitudes towards homelessness — the prejudices, the ignorance, the fears. An audience of homeless people appeals to an altogether different structure of legitimacy — in-

cluding literacy barriers, cultural preferences, distrust of outsider authority, educational limitations, safety concerns, disrespect — not to mention the ways mental illness, addiction, physical health and social alienation play into assessments by the homeless of what is and is not a legitimate form of understanding. In particular, the festival addresses dominant cultural hostility and exclusion expressed towards the homeless in public spaces: the festival is arranged to invert this tendency and to create a public space where it is the homeless who are welcomed first and foremost, an assertion made by offering free food, shelter, medical services, fire barrels for warmth, an acceptance of smoking and other kinds of shunned social behaviors, and forms of entertainment (for example, adult clowning that draws on rough, lude and physical kinds of humour) that according to Roy will appeal to the homeless who come to the festival.

ATSA views its cultural work as art, and feels strongly that their work must reflect both elements of artistic traditions (such as the emphasis on originality) and artistic ideological independence:

We want to be independent of and have an independent look on society. So I'm not saying what the community centres who are working all year long with homeless people tell me what to say, you know, I'm not their "porte-parole". We're artists so we are looking at the society and making intervention, an intervention in the city to expose what we feel about the society. And we are making this art piece for it to speak about a reality, for it to speak about who we are as human beings right now.

Events like *Etat d'urgence* fall into the category of "experimental communities" and "boundary organizations", which are the design and implementation of materials, resources and systems in which "forms of knowledge, imaginaries and social relations can

be clarified, enhanced and developed”; or more succinctly, “a framework of flexible mutual expectations” that allow for at least partly unstructured collaboration (Basualdo and Laddaga 2009, 198-199). ATSA strives to make sense of its cultural work in order to satisfy their own trajectories as professional artists within wider legitimacies of artistic practice and art discourse:

Well as artists, you know, you always have like super rules. You don't do things that have already been done, which is not the same in the activist world — they don't care about that because [as an activist] you don't take your gratification from the originality of your idea ... as an artist, if it was great when he did it, well I won't do it because I'll [be] copying the other artist. So I'll do different, I want to be innovative, I want to be original ... it's gonna be powerful but it's gonna be our way to say it. An *ATSA* way to say it ... otherwise you know, it would be clearly activism.

ATSA's legitimacies must be established within these competing sensibilities (of artists and their funders), homeless people, the general public), and they are challenging terms on which some legitimacies (for example, the social exclusion of homeless people) are founded. They navigate these competing legitimacies by engaging in aesthetic tactics that invert dominant conditions of social inclusion/exclusion through sensibilities that can only overcome their ambiguities and take meaningful shape in the exemplary conditions realized (through participation) in the strange and wonderful potentials created by the *Etat d'urgence* festival.

* * *

What these cases have in common is their struggle to make kinds of experience visible that must struggle for epistemic legitimacy within forms of public knowledge. *The Dominion* emphasizes experiences that run counter to dominant forms of understand-

ing within capitalist and neoliberal terms. *Broken City Lab* confounds public expectations about Windsor and the public's role in shaping its future with possibilities for inclusion and engagement. ATSA rejects the social relations that produce and perpetuate homelessness. And *Ladies Sasquatch* manifests a radical political lesbian identity in terms that include possibilities for identification for non-radical and non-lesbian audiences. Or course, to achieve meaning above and beyond labels of foolishness and error these cultural texts must address the terms on which the legitimacies of the relations of domination with which they are concerned; or in other words, they must take a position on "truth" and knowledge — in every case, in opposition to particular "truths" and forms of knowledge; and, even if only in subtle or implicit terms, also in terms of making visible and manifest forms of experience that in their very visibility call into question the legitimacy of the relations of domination from which the targeted forms of abuse have arisen.

How these cultural texts engage in the tensions between "truth", visibility and epistemic illegitimacy is by employing aesthetic tactics to navigate these competing structures of legitimacy that reflect both relations of domination and of dissent. These aesthetic tactics engage with both representational and relational dimensions of communication, the former encompassing the metastructures of modes of apprehension and the engagement with ambiguity, and the latter encompassing shared social identities and exemplary validities. My analysis will now consider each of these elements of aesthetic experience alone, drawing on two of the cases described for each element to explore how aesthetics enigmatically arranges and rearranges relations of power.

CHAPTER 6 – Case Studies: Aesthetics of Representation

Communication can be understood to draw on (at least) two different qualities of meaning. The first and traditional way of thinking about communication, is in terms of its representational content, i.e. what meanings are expressed, what meanings are understood. Representational attributes encompass the aesthetics of modes of apprehension and ambiguity. The second is the relational context created, maintained or destabilized through a communicative event. A cultural text will have its own context, and each context will have its own expectations and rules of understanding through which meaning and the relationships of participants will be derived. Relational attributes encompass senses of belonging and exemplary validities. In this chapter, I will examine representational attributes of aesthetic experience.

Modes of apprehension refer to the meta-structures of engagement – categories of understanding indicated by such attributes as genre and frames that guide meaning in one direction or other; the expectations aroused in a humorous text, for example, as compared to a eulogy. In this first part of this chapter, I will consider the aesthetic modes engaged in *The Dominion* and *Etat d'urgence*. Ambiguities of course interfere with meaning and must either be minimized to achieve meaning, or delimited to distinguish what is known from what isn't known, or intentionally encouraged. In the second part, I will consider the ambiguous aesthetics of *Ladies Sasquatch* and *Broken City Lab*.

Aesthetic 'modes of apprehension' in *The Dominion & Etat d'urgence*

The 'modes of apprehension' in cultural texts are the extra-textual guides that provide signposts for legibility, credibility and appropriateness in any given communicative context. They are criteria of meaning established within the "games" within which we use language to both share sensibility and arrange relationships (Wittgenstein 2009, 185). Communicative choices are influenced by understandings of modes — for example, a scientific mode as compared to the mode of apprehension applied to music. The disinterested foundation for objectivity — speculation that the object and subject are entirely severable — establishes one set of criteria for "truth" which installs its own related methods of verification. An integrated aesthetic experience emphasizes an experiential mode of apprehension where meaning is derived through the conflation of subject and object through the experience of the encounter between text and interpretation. An ironic mode, to take another example, demands particular approaches to representational meaning, as do humour, sarcasm and playfulness. The criteria of understanding associated with each mode conditions how "truths" will manifest for both creators and their audiences. Thus, modes of apprehension offer discursive territories where legitimacies of domination are both asserted and can be challenged in the production of public knowledge.

In *The Dominion*, for example, legitimacy is being sought among two audiences in particular: a general public that reflects the perceived sensibilities of the "average" Canadian, by which the editors mean a mass audience in the traditional sense comprised of competing interests, cultural backgrounds, professions, economic status, etc. but which

will necessarily include individuals who do not share the editors critical orientation towards Western liberal democracies and capitalism; and, the second group is a public open to the possibility that existing political and economic structures and policies can and should be changed to address and correct inappropriate outcomes. *The Dominion* mimics aspects of mainstream national newspapers like the *Globe and Mail* by adopting an objective mode of apprehension that argues for its own indexical relationship with states-of-affairs in the world to be rendered through rational argumentation, empirical evidence and by reducing ambiguity. *The Dominion*, as editor Tim McSorley stated unequivocally, wants to produce information on which audiences can base decisions to act, i.e. information relevant to self-governance.

Etat d'urgence is also making challenges to the status quo. With its festival for the homeless, *Etat d'urgence* is attempting to challenge attributes of public knowledge with assertions that homeless people need to be treated with respect; need to be made to feel welcome; need to be invited into the visibility of public spaces; need to be cared for with food, shelter, clothing, medical help, psychological counseling; need to be invited into structures of meaningful contribution; need to be entertained; need to have access to arts and crafts workshops; need to have warm barrels of fire to sit around; need to have laughter and fun. All of this in contrast, of course, to popular sensibilities about homelessness as a problem of addiction, criminality, mental illness, laziness. How ATSA responds to this divide is to invite both audiences into the possibility of new realities manifest in the individual and collective experiences at the festival.

By structuring *Etat d'urgence* as a cultural festival, ATSA challenges the credibilities and appropriateness of how dominant culture responds to homelessness through the improvisational participation of target audiences in a cultural-event-cum-experimental-community. The legibility of fears of the general public are considered in framing the event as an art festival with high-profile artists, musicians and performers — a way to transform a large gathering of homeless into a cultural asset. A refugee camp for crowds of homeless in any Canadian city is a somewhat alarming spectacle, and yet these events are not only allowed but encouraged by city officials and attended by tens of thousands of non-homeless Montrealers. ATSA calls it “social architecture” (Roy, 3), where they build a social structure where real people have real experiences that upend aspects of conventional knowing.

The Dominion, on the other hand, is expressly adopting the credibilities of dominant culture by appropriating the objective mode of apprehension for its production of cultural meanings, but it is simultaneously asserting experiences that reveal difficult outcomes from the effects of existing relations of power in Western liberal democracies. For example, in Issue #68, we encounter descriptions of Canadian migrant labour policies wreaking havoc in migrants’ lives with the intent of servicing industrial labour needs rather than the well-being of migrant populations. We encounter the destructive impact of arctic development in Canada on Inuit communities, climate change and caribou populations. We encounter the worsening well-being of Canadian women (as compared to men) in an international comparative study. And so on. *The Dominion* is asserting and estab-

lishing legibility and credibility for the experiences of people who are resisting the effects of power.

To navigate the epistemic criteria that would render these experiences as untrue, like ATSA, *The Dominion* invites its audiences into the process of creating the cultural fields of meaning that make up the texts produced. But the mode of apprehension by which they do this is altogether different. *The Dominion* is a newspaper whose meanings reside in the objective “truths” it reports. How it does this without replicating the relations of domination it seeks to destabilize is largely through a reflexive organizational structure that opens channels of participation in knowledge production to those who are the objects of reportage. The subject/object divide on which traditional notions of objectivity depend is structurally challenged when those who are the objects of stories have a say in creating the story. The objects of stories become the subjects themselves. The structure of *The Dominion*, by facilitating news production through a geographically disaggregated network of independent cooperatives that encourage participation by precisely those communities who benefit least from, for example, policies of advanced capitalism (i.e. Aboriginal communities, migrant labour, the poor, queer communities), manifests procedurally the shared experience of meaning described by Gadamer in the coming together of text and interpretation (Gadamer 1975).

This also has significance in other ways. On *The Dominion* website (as compared to the bi-monthly print publication), where contributors can freely post contributions with little editorial oversight, what has emerged is a community of readers and writers who

verify stories on their own behalf. The audience is testing and authoring the verification procedures applied to the meanings produced. Stories with dubious or questionable information are challenged by other reader/writers, evidence of what John Hartley (2000) describes as a “redactional” society where “truths” are understood to emerge over time through collective and participatory cultural processes. There is a kind of epistemic independence being asserted, an admission that public knowledge is an engagement that requires collective participation.

Another outcome of this structural conflation of subject/object in meaning production, is the central importance of political movements and social activism in the reportage in *The Dominion*. Through the manifestation of meaning in the conflation of subject with object – of reader with news story — the experience of challenging, destabilizing, reorganizing, influencing and rejecting existing relations of power is rendered within a framework of legitimacy rooted in objective rational “truth”. In Issue #68, we find stories about:

- ◆ The mobilization of street protests at the G8/G20 summit to protest Canadian laws that result in the mistreatment of migrant workers.
- ◆ The need for amendments to the Criminal Code to allow for criminal prosecution for crimes committed by Canadian mining companies overseas.
- ◆ New broad political focuses such as decolonization and anti-nationalism that are uniting social movements together in a united confrontation with policies of the G8 / G20 leadership of Western liberal democracies.
- ◆ Indigenous support for the mobilization of protest at the G8 / G20 summit in Toronto, and the first-time that anti-capitalist and anti-colonial movements have united.
- ◆ A day of action in support of First Nations across Canada (June 24).

- ◆ An editorial encouraging participation in the planned protests for the G8 / G20 summits.
- ◆ A movement in support of taxing speculative trading worldwide that would raise billions for the provision of healthcare and education.
- ◆ A call by indigenous leaders and environmentalists for a moratorium on oil and gas exploration in the arctic.
- ◆ Monitoring of activists by state security agencies in Canada, and state escalation of anxiety and militarization of response.

All of these stories address inappropriate outcomes from the structures and policies of dominant forms of economic and political organization, and these structures and policies (which generally fall into the categories of capitalism and Western liberal democracy) are presented as ‘subject to change’: they are changeable and can be changed and many instances must be changed. *The Dominion* adopts the legibilities and credibilities of mainstream news and its methods of verification in order to assert new standards of what is appropriate as a result of public policies and institutional decision-making. What isn’t appropriate are policies that manifest in poverty, in degraded livelihoods, in environmental destruction, in disregard for Aboriginal communities and rights, in unequal well-being between men and women, in vulnerable populations. It also is not appropriate to disallow public participation in news production, a direct challenge and arguably the most important challenge to the legitimacies of mainstream news and the relations of power from which they emerge. By excluding certain voices from the processes of creating objective “truth” through mainstream news, certain experiences – those that resist the effects of power -- are excluded from public knowledge.

The mode of apprehension engaged by ATSA shares this emphasis on public participation as a means to challenging the legitimacies of power. “We need individuals to be more involved,” Roy says, “to not separate our life from authority, and to think that we are authority, and [to realize] that for that to happen you need to be involved and informed” (Roy, 21). One of the ways ATSA encouraged public participation in such an unusual gathering is to make it legible using the theme of “Tout inclus”, the all-inclusive vacation package, a common and widely understood set of relationships. But ATSA's all-inclusive vacation for the homeless inverts not only who can take advantage of an all expenses paid vacation, but who society's inclusions include, and even who benefits in places in the global south where, more often than not, local indigenous and poor populations are also excluded from the comforts being offered to tourists:

We're offering an all-inclusive in our way, but to people who are excluded in society, so that's where it takes it's critical sense [and raises questions about] who's in, who's out, and who fits, who doesn't fit in the package you want to sell of your city - your beautiful city. [*Etat d'urgence*] was a nice plateau to speak about those issues and have fun at the same time. And to have an aesthetic that is joining everyone, because we are bombarded with publicity of holidays and having a nice time everywhere and being happy. So it was a very nice idea on multiple bases, because at the same time, we could really have fun, like having this mini-putt, and shuffleboard, and karaoke – we played the game! And we did have fun. (Roy, 15)

There is something nonsensical about “Tout inclus” with its images of outdoor swimming pools and lounge chairs in a Montreal winter. And the idea of an all inclusive vacation — or arts festival — for those who are among the poorest citizens, also flirts with a kind of absurdity, at least within dominant cultural assumptions. But these excessively imaginary motifs provide the structures of meaning within which new possibilities

can emerge: they are, in a sense, structures of opportunity where the tension between the homeless and the rest of society is extracted from its usual conditions and allowed to unfold in undetermined ways. The festival inversion and absurdities work as a cultural distancing mechanism, distancing the event of encounter with homeless from our usual expectations and assumptions:

When you see a film about incest, you can look at it and think. But if you would arrive in front of your father doing something to your young sister, maybe you would run away and don't say anything. Maybe you would kill him. I don't know. The reaction would be very different and being able to having this transposition ... [an idea of distance] ... but it's a distance to create "un rapprochement". It's not a distance to stay distant. It's a distance just to be less frightened of the subject, and then approaching it with your own way to approach it and... Because when you're in *État d'urgence*, it's real and not real. You're in both shoes you know. (Roy, 33-34)

It is a mode of apprehension that offers opportunities to upset the credibilities of dominant cultural perceptions about who the homeless are and what they do (presumably, also for the homeless, to upend perceptions of the general public as hostile and dangerous). And it offers opportunities to challenge in an embodied way the appropriateness of ignoring or mistreating homeless people, and ignoring the issue of homelessness.

Another confounding quality of *Etat d'urgence* is the festival aspect of the event – not a charity event, but a place to have fun, a place where performers are coming to entertain, a place where the homeless are treated with the respect afforded to customers and patrons. In this unusual place, that is both “real and not real”, it is the homeless participants who are made to feel welcome and it is the non-homeless people who feel “out of place” (Roy, 35). “The excluded is the 'vedette'”, Roy explains, the star, the center of

attention; and the regular population “feels weird to be there” when usually its the other way around (Roy, 35):

That’s how he feels 360 days of the year. He doesn’t fit in the package, he’s not appropriate. It’s not appropriate for him to be there. He smells bad, he speaks loud, he’s unhappy, he’s destroying. So you [the general public] arrive there [at the festival] and you’re like – what the fuck am I doing here, what is that, what can I do. (Roy, 35)

Within the “real and not real” qualities of the festival, as described by Roy, unique social situations unfold. It is a “fantasy” world where homeless people work as volunteers to run the event, where they are welcomed and treated with generosity, where homeless and non-homeless alike share social and physical space. But it is also a “fantasy” world used by local police as a “cooling down” destination (rather than a holding cell in the local jail) for intoxicated itinerants apprehended in other parts of the city while the festival is on. (Roy suggests that a recent initiative by the Montreal municipality to build a facility to hold homeless itinerants until they are calm, sober, and safe organized on principles of harm reduction rather than criminalization is a response to the success police have had in using the festival for just such a purpose.)

The festival, according to Roy, is a place where “street soldiers” (i.e. homeless youth) who might otherwise fight with each other can sit around a campfire and share stories and strategies of surviving in the street (Roy, 10). It is a vision of overcoming the divide between homeless and general publics with mediation rather than confrontation: mediation based on mutual respect and that tries to overcome disagreement by looking for commonality and shared interests. (An example offered by Roy of the potential of so-

cial mediation is the case of someone sleeping on the doorstep of a cafe: rather than physical eviction and criminalization to remove the homeless person, social mediation would suggest trying to explain that their presence is bad for business and offering a muffin and coffee in exchange for sleeping elsewhere. “It’s not that easy,” she admits, “but I think there’s a lack of social mediation in the city, and a project like [Etat d’urgence] is kind of a small moment of mediation” (Roy, 35)).

Key to understanding the mode of apprehension structuring meaning in *Etat d’urgence*, is the way audiences are invited to exercise their own agencies within the structures created by ATSA in making sense of what happens at the festival on a personal level. It is these agencies that ATSA wants to render in legitimate terms, to make space for in public culture, and to encourage:

I think we’re bombarded with information, and at one point, you accept and you believe in this one ... there’s a system there. But then you also see its failure, and you see that there are poor people and that pollution is going up and that it’s not functioning. So you read other things, *and at one point you make your own kind of lecture of what you would like it to be.* ... So, I guess it’s a sense of justice that can be for me, part of the truth, to see that I would like people to live in a world that is more equal and just, and why wouldn’t it be true. Why wouldn’t it function? It could work. Like believing it can work. (Roy, 32-33)

By rendering such unwelcome (in dominant culture) knowledges in the form of personal experience, the legitimacy of dominant “truths” about homeless people and homelessness are challenged by the legitimacies of the experiences had during the event.

The modes of apprehension at work in *The Dominion* and *Etat d’urgence* suggest tactical approaches to the legibilities, credibilities and appropriatenesses that ground the legitimacies of power in the dominant cultures encountered in each case. *Etat d’urgence*

is a festival-cum-experimental-community where audiences are invited to encounter realities within its structure. What “truths” will emerge from the event in the form of personal experience will come up against the fiats of power that would have homeless people excluded, rendered invisible and vilified. The challenges to dominant culture’s understanding of “truth” about homelessness are rendered legible, credible and appropriate through the embodied mode of apprehension of personal experience. *The Dominion* is a newspaper where audiences are reassured of the legibilities and credibilities of how it constructs meaning by the adoption of dominant culture’s objective mode of apprehension. *The Dominion* ‘looks, smells and feels’ like mainstream news. But it reads differently. *The Dominion* structurally challenges the appropriateness of excluding the public from its production processes, and of excluding the voices of those who not only benefit least from existing relations of power, but whose experiences are the objects of reportage. *The Dominion’s* mode of apprehension includes a structural adjustment that locates the voices of those resisting the effects of power at the centre of a structures of legitimacy grounded in rational argumentation and empirical justification.

These are aesthetic *tactics* in the sense that they defy the fiats of power of dominant epistemic legitimacy at work in the production of meaning in Canadian culture. The modes of apprehension in play are fundamentally significant in how meaning manifests, and yet they resist epistemic categorization enough to allow competing “truths” to share elements of legitimacy.

Aesthetic Ambiguity: Ambiguous Uncertainty in Ladies Sasquatch and Broken City Lab

The second category of aesthetic experience in the category of representational aesthetics is ambiguity, which describes feelings of undecidability, unknowing and uncertainty. Kant's second moment emerged from what he described as the freeplay of perception and imagination, an inability to ground perception in understanding. Ambiguity is arguably a foundation of the human condition and inescapable attribute of language and communication (Deleuze 1995; Derrida 1985; Piantidosi et al. 2011; Merleau-Ponty 2002). As discussed, an objective mode of apprehension like that used in journalism attempts to eliminate ambiguities but uses conventions of verification to mask epistemic shortcomings. According to Michael Taussig, on a social level, this inherent "epistemic murkiness" comes to play a significant role in the formation of social reality and strategic foundation of social power. Taussig describes "public secrets" as a category of public knowledge that contains what cannot be known, but what is known; a form of public knowledge comprised of the enigma of revelation and simultaneous concealment (1999). Marcia Klotz (1998) has argued that just such a category of epistemic ambiguity was instrumental in the use of cinema to mobilize the conflicted desires of Germans (about concentration camps, miscegenation, sadistic cruelty, etc.) in support of Nazi authority. "Public secrets" suggest a cultural domain outside of the structures of rational justification where the struggle over eventualization can play out on other than rational terms.

Ladies Sasquatch is expected to appeal to young radical lesbians, to "super-conservative homophobes", to rural residents, to feminists and to an art community. This

last category of audience and attendant structure of legitimacy is, in the order of things, one of the first appeals made given the settings where *Ladies Sasquatch* has had the most access to public encounter — in institutional art galleries. Mitchell positions her work artistically in what she calls “messy craft”, a genre of artistic practice that celebrates domestic arts often associated with housework and do-it-yourself (DIY) forms of cultural expression. Craft (or “craftivism” as it is sometimes called) is positioned within feminist discourses as a response to the undervaluing of women’s cultural contributions and as a form of community building and resistance to the industrialization of the cultural industries (Minihan and Wolfram 2007; Pentney 2008):

There is a playfulness in the aesthetic [in *Ladies Sasquatch*] that reads almost juvenile or child-like, and in part that’s because of the methods that I make work...I’m not trained as an artist so there’s a quality of amateur hobbyist in the actual [work] ... I don’t rely on factories to make my work. There’s a hand - you could see the hand in the work. It’s messy — there’s actually a whole category that’s starting to be talked about called messy craft. It’s not messy in that kind of way, but it’s uh, it’s not perfect. [Mitchell 26]

‘Craft’ as a form of cultural resistance also responds to the ways that the designation of a cultural artifact as ‘craft’ rather than ‘art’ has been used to extend the legitimacies of colonization through art discourses (Steele 2009). *Ladies Sasquatch* fits well within the resistant imaginaries of feminist craft, especially within the institutional contexts of the Canadian gallery system.

There’s often a kind of playfulness that reads [as] sort of juvenile quality or child-like quality, and in part that’s because of the methods that I make work. I’m not trained as an artist so there’s a quality of amateur hobbyist in the actual, and I don’t rely on factories to make my work. You could see the “hand” in the work ... It’s messy in some ways. There’s an aesthetic of nostalgia in my work, and I think it’s because of the materials that I use. I use a lot of found domestic textile mate-

rials in my sculptures and in my films as well, and so I think that adds to the sense of sentimentality. People identify with the materials from their histories in a kind of experiential subjective way. (Mitchell, 2-3)

At the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Mitchell's work was met with a certain level of institutional hesitation and, according to Mitchell, hostility, even after it was moved to the less prominent room, she felt the curator was "disgusted" by the sculptures. Mitchell is, on a certain level, challenging structures of legitimacy in the art world itself:

I feel like the work is trying to break conventions of art in that it's not craft, it's not textile art, it's not fiber art, it's not also, a lot of people would think that it's not fine sculpture, it's not what is understood often to be installation work. It's hybrid and so it defies a lot of the conventions of what art is by its material, by its content, so I feel like it defies the conventions of art in lots of ways ... Minimalist art, conceptual art and experimental film often exist in a realm of male artists, it gets validated by real patriarchal institutions and the connections to power around definition of what art is and what is good art, and what's valid art is something that I want to mess with. So, being able to make work that defies those conventions, but it gets put into those institutions despite how they defy those conventions, is really interesting to me. I don't let the dog out, it's asking me to. [Mitchell, 30]

And yet, Mitchell is well aware of the legitimacies that accrue with institutional acceptance and how these legitimacies play in audiences of the general public:

But there's also something about taking advantage of being legitimized by the institution, by somebody who's saying - like the Art Gallery of Ontario, or McMaster University - we stand behind this ... I feel like there's a difference between, if the work is there [in an institutional gallery] or if it's in a community center, or something like that, because in a way that people, folks get intimidated by the capital A Art world and institutions do often set the standard of what we say this is art ... there's something that happens with the work moving through museums and galleries that [is] teaching people that this is legitimate. [Mitchell 16]

The label as art removes the sculpture from the arguably more threatening categories of political communication, public policy, activism, etc. For example, in its appeal to both radical lesbian and rural conservative audiences (let alone the openly hostile homophobic

audiences), *Ladies Sasquatch* encounters (patriarchal) understandings of women, of female bodies and sexuality, of the pornographies of lesbian sexuality, of heteronormativity, of thinness, of whiteness with radical separatist lesbian politics through strong female bodies, large female bodies, and eroticization and sexualities that reject the ways the male gaze constructs female subjectivities. These females are humanoid, not human — they are Sasquatches which is an encounter with Aboriginal cultural mythologies; and in any event, any racial connotations at work in the sculpture are somewhat enigmatic.

Ladies Sasquatch blurs the boundaries of legitimacy with the ambiguities of playfulness, humour and most importantly through the use of textiles used tactically to evoke senses of nostalgia, comfort and familiarity rooted in memories of home and childhood. (The textiles used in the sculpture were collected in second-hand shops over many years — hand-knit afghan blankets, bedspreads, curtains, fun-fur).

I feel as though the materials and the way that people connect to the materials and get down with it, that they are seduced by the familiarity, the comfort, the tactility, the softness of the materials that. I feel like that indicates the truth of the work. (Mitchell, 6)

Playfulness, nostalgia, sensuality, comfort all work to draw the spectator in – physically, as viewers are encouraged to experience the sculptures up close, to step up onto the platform, touch the giants and join the circle around the fire. “People walk in here, and they become part of this circle ... implicated in the lesbian feminism separatist politics, regardless of gender” (Mitchell, 8). The spectator is encouraged to belong in this group rather than to feel “othered” and alienated; the old blankets and bed spreads and hand-knit af-

ghans of which the giants are made recall childhood comforts for many, and in this way subtly, nostalgically, comfortingly, the subjugated knowledges become their own. But the sculptures themselves resist abandoning the radical nature of the identity with their size, their fearsomeness, their collectiveness, their sexuality for other than patriarchal gaze.

I think of ambivalence like the pendulum swing between love and hate, between happy/sad, it's like celebration/shame, that kind of pendulum swing — that the work exists within those different readings and those different experiences. So it's not so much that I feel like the work is ambiguous, but it has an ambivalence. It's like my work around fat activism which is parleyed in the Sasquatches and in a lot of work I do, is not about some like universal truth of fatness, or positive experience of fatness, but it tries to capture like the depressing, elation, love, hate, sadness, happiness of all of those things. [Mitchell, 26]

Broken City Lab is appealing to similarly wide audiences including elected officials and community leaders, the residents of Windsor generally, and the artistic community. *Broken City Lab* is encountering the structures of legitimacy at play in the formation of public policy. And they navigate these complexities in part through the tactical use of ambiguity. The dominant narratives about Windsor fuel an exodus from the city, according to the group. High unemployment, a depressed economy, high crime rates and an apparently unresponsive and worse, unimaginative local government support perceptions of Windsor as a no-hope city with a bleak future and few opportunities. And the complexities of being a border town, the busiest border crossing between the US and Canada, with six levels of government in operation, also encourage perceptions on the one hand of bureaucracies unwilling to listen to local residents, and on the other of a population unwilling to participate in finding solutions to the problems facing Windsor as

a post-industrial town struggling to relocate its economic and cultural centres of gravity. *Broken City Lab* is encountering the structures of legitimacy that support these forms of public knowledge.

Their identities as artists, and the public understanding of their cultural work as art, is an important part of how they remain legible and credible within the structures of understanding they are criticizing. On the one hand, art-world legitimacies can be alienating for many members of the general public:

The reason I enjoy using text across a lot of my work is because people happen upon it and don't immediately think "oh, now I'm having an art experience". I think text can operate between a few different places, and that's along the same lines as how the text we choose I hope can prompt a few different [interpretations]. This isn't to say that paintings can't do that too, but it reminds that when you approach something, it changes when you know it's a painting and you know it's a sculpture. (Langois[1], 6)

It's [Broken City Lab's approach] appropriate because it's accessible to everyone and it's inclusive and especially in terms of text. I guess it does like require a level of literacy, but it allows everyone who encounters it to be able to take something from it. They don't have to have an art theory background or have any deep analytical training in order to read our messages and take something from it, no matter what level that is that they're taking from our work. (Naccarato, 16)

And yet, art-world legitimacies, just as they are for *Ladies Sasquatch*, can be useful in challenging the legitimacies of political and economic structures of power because of how they "relocate", or perhaps complicate, where the legitimacies lie:

On one hand I'm not interested in having those conversation around the big idea in art, but I am interested in what art can do in other spaces ... Why as an art project can I do something that will read much differently than if an activist group or protest group tried to do the same thing? I think being an artist allows a flexibility. Approaching these different roles as an art project can seem overly slippery

sometimes. If we were a community organization that wanted to do something with a very specific goal, then that is what we would do, and if we do something else then we're not really that thing any more. As an artist you can do that thing, and it doesn't so much have to look like the thing you did before, yet you can still be an artist ... My view of being an artist is that it allows a holistic thinking around things. If you are a politician, if you are an engineer, you have to approach problems in certain ways. Artists can approach problems in many different ways and it's still OK to do that. Nobody asks: you're an artist, why would you do that? They say, of course you'd do that. you're an artist. (Langois[1], 6)

Both creators use the legitimacies of art to create ambiguities that overcome limitations on what is appropriate, at least initially — by asserting the radical, strong, separatist qualities in *Ladies Sasquatch* and the positive, publicly motivating, assertion of influence over public policy in *Broken City Lab's* work — within the structures of legitimacy at play in dominant culture that would otherwise reject these subjugated elements of meaning.

Broken City Lab engages ambiguity as a way of encouraging and perhaps even forcing participation by audiences, at least imaginatively, but also physically, emotionally, intellectually as a means of complicating the tensions between legitimacies of power and legitimacies of criticality:

A lot of our text based interventions really operate in a few different ways. Very pragmatically, it would be difficult to sustain this kind of public practice in a place the size of Windsor if everything was critical. What we try to do is have these short textual interventions that can operate at the level of something that is positive and critical depending on how you want to approach the subject. Talking about truth at that level, the work that we try to do really moves between the two levels. (Langois[1], 3)

In *Text-In-Transit*, for example, the short phrases placed alongside advertising in busses were selected from submissions from the general public. Questions like “Who is

sitting next to you?” or “It won't cost you anything and think of how nice it will be” are all but nonsensical, until the audience's own structures of legitimacy and meaning are brought into play sitting there in the bus, moving through the streets of Windsor. Similarly, the awards for 'hope' and apologies attached to places in Windsor in *Sites of Apology / Sites of Hope* derives much of its credibility through the direct participation of community members and their choices and explanations for why this or that site should be registered. Places in Windsor are awarded based on public opinions rather than official opinions. *Make This Better* is visually bizarre (the insertion of three dimensional letters into urban landscape which, in a sense, render the landscape in terms similar to those of advertising), but becomes more legible when encountered by local residents who know the location and associated problems. The seemingly nonsensical attempt to have one city speak to another using laser-projects messages on the sides of buildings (*Cross Border Communication*) registers as more meaningful for those who encounter the laser-projected messages on the sides of buildings in the Windsor/Detroit border zone where two communities are separated by only a few hundred meters, but bureaucratic security so thick that according to the artists it severely curtails even just visiting back and forth to enjoy cultural exchanges.

The role of ambiguity is what gets people to engage with our work. Its not being straightforward and allowing people to take their subjectivity and place it onto our work to create their own meaning is what gets them to engage in our projects and in the city as a whole, because our projects are kind of metaphors of what we think the city is. (Naccarato, 14)

Ambiguity is definitely important and it plays a very important role in everyone's

understanding. Because it gets people past the point where we're trying to tell them something specific ... it moves them to [where, for example] they're suggesting things to me and I can complete the thought in my head. (Soulliere, 19).

It has been observed that the degree to which audience participation in meaning is encouraged or discouraged can be moderated in the text. Low levels of ambiguity encourage preferred readings while high levels of ambiguity provide more resources or opportunities for variable interpretations (Rivera-Perez 1996). Enigma demands audiences fill in the epistemic blanks to ground the ambiguity in some sense of meaning, offering the possibility that new understandings can emerge with the legitimacies of one's own imagination.

Mitchell also uses text to layer her meanings. The title *Ladies Sasquatch* (which invokes mythological knowledges) hints at the epistemological oscillation between real/unreal in the sculpture, as does the unusual juxtaposition of "ladies" and "sasquatch". And the "didactic" (or artist statement) included in an accompanying catalogue roots *Ladies Sasquatch* firmly in the Deep Lez project.¹⁴ It is like a physical instantiation of an optical illusion: look at the sculpture one way, and there are six playful "stuffed-animal" monsters that invoke childhood fantasies; look at it another way, and there is a collective of sexually-charged she-beasts with strength, independence and fierceness living a world without men.

14 The use of text as an alternate or perhaps accompanying mode of apprehension for less ambiguously rendered knowledge is particularly clever in another of Mitchell's installations: a tent structure comprised of a tunnel through which spectators crawl to arrive at a small, tented area arranged with pillows for comfort and for sitting and lingering. The child-like homemade fort is called: *Hungry Purse: The Vagina Dentata in Late Capitalism*. The text in this case operates on two levels of apprehension: a much more direct and less ambiguous criticism of extant relations of power, and humorously.

These competing tensions create enough ambiguity that it is not easy to alight firmly enough on the challenging legitimacies to condemn them outright. And this of course reflects Mitchell's concern to not leave audiences out of her work. For example, one anecdote Mitchell tells about how a group of maintenance workers, all men, responded to the exhibition at McMaster University demonstrates her deep desire to communicate across competing structures of legitimacy. This particular group of male university employees apparently came to view *Ladies Sasquatch* repeatedly:

At McMaster, they told me that when it was up at the gallery, that all these guys from, I can't remember what they called it, but like works, the works department, like the mechanics, the truck drivers, the garbage guys on the on the campus, all came several times to see the exhibition. And [when they visited the gallery, they would] be like: "I told you it was *Ladies Sasquatches* in here." Like — that's incredible to me. So sure, they may have a pin-up in their lunch room (or did and until fifteen years ago when people told they had take it down) or the sunshine girl may be on the coffee table, but this kind of interrupts that pornography in a way by its spectacle, by its size which I haven't really talked about that at all, the scale, the material, so that dudes who -- we've never had these guys come in to the gallery. They came in to see the *Sasquatch Ladies*, and then brought their friends to be like, "we told you". I think that's pretty cool. [Mitchell, 17]

The subtleties at work are tremendous.

It's rural mythology, and it's also lesbian mythology too, I think that that's partly why the *Sasquatches* work so well as a symbol or not a symbol, but as a representative for lesbian in this way, because it's like that thing with lesbians where so many straight people either pretend to be okay with that stuff, but don't actually participate in the culture, or don't know any dikes ... the lesbian *Sasquatches* in a rural context kind of like pulls the rug out from under the porno section of lesbians in the convenience store in that small town which may be some of the only lesbian visibility that happens. [Mitchell, 15]

In the same way that *Ladies Sasquatch* draws its audiences through its ambigui-

ties with the comforts and familiarity of nostalgia, mythology and the playfulness of childhood fantasies, *Broken City Lab*'s cultural texts often work within cultural conventions that resist the ambiguities they create.

With us its about figuring out how to reclaim space around ideas and space around narratives in a way that is accessible, but that also presents a visual experience that isn't super foreign. It can look sometimes like a design project or like advertising campaign of some kind. And that is not to say that we set out to do those things, so much as to say we understand inherently that this is the grammar used on a daily basis to send very specific messages. And maybe we can work within that space to send very different type of message. (Langois[1], 5)

This is one of the reasons that *Broken City Lab* cultural work relies so heavily on text. In urban locations we are inundated by text through advertising, and this becomes the familiar and non-threatening structure of legitimacy that *Broken City Lab* encounters messaging that is challenging in some cases the very legitimacies on which this urban palimpsest of messaging depends.

We're really good at accepting and consuming ad-based stuff, there's so much signage everywhere that people approach and allow that to wash over them. And if you occupy some of that space with something a little bit different that can wash over someone, it becomes -- its interesting to think about having work in that type of space. {Langois[1], 6)

So we just use something that could exist, but you know, when you look again, you kind of see something else. Same with the [transit] ads, when you look at them again, you notice that it's not trying to sell you anything, [that its] something that's a bit more like a gift. (Soulliere, 13)

Cross-Border Communication appropriated the motif of billboard advertising (and to some extent graffiti) signage. "Make This Better" on a certain level resembles a brand-

ing technique or campaign. *Text-in-Transit* uses advertising panels in public transit. *Sites of Apology / Sites of Hope* used giant ribbons for their awards reminiscent of childhood sporting event ribbons. These are questions in the first instance of legibility. The use of convention allows a skeptical, tired and perhaps unconfident public access to the texts by overcoming what the artists expect would be a tendency to reject the legitimacies of art. The ways in which the messages are confounding dominant understandings about Windsor are shrouded in the banality and familiarity — the non-threatening legitimacies — of advertising.

Mitchell's textiles do much the same work, creating familiarity for the unfamiliar:

Going back to my materials, in part it's the attachment that folks have to those materials, the familiarity of textile, like we wear it on our bodies every day. It surrounds us every day, we sleep between textiles. There's something that is comfortable for people that allows the politics to sneak in. So even if they are inappropriate politics, it's like a Trojan horse. I feel like the textiles carry the ideas into the place and the aesthetics, the way it looks, seduces people. The sense of humor also is a way of getting the politics into the place that allows it to have a larger microphone ... [Mitchell, 35]

As mentioned, institutional approval (i.e. Gallery settings for exhibitions) is one of the ways *Ladies Sasquatch* navigates the challenging credibilities of lesbian politics and a dominant society that wants to reject them. *Broken City Lab* in its cultural work adopts the credibilities of anyone who assumes the legitimacy to address the public through public text-based communication — for example, like advertisers. The act of putting cultural texts into the public realm alone raises questions about who is “allowed” to do this, and the fact that *Broken City Lab* represents a constituency generally excluded

from the legitimacies of public policy discussions — young students — throws into confusion any sensibilities around expertise, elected status, age status, wealth status. And on a wider level, such an independently motivated gesture raises questions about the credibility for citizens having a say in policy matters. In *Cross-Border Communication, Broken City Lab* claims the right to speak on behalf of the city of Windsor in an attempt at international communication with, again, a somewhat anonymous and random public, both in Windsor and Detroit – whoever might happen upon the large, illuminated messages projected using laser technology onto the faces of buildings facing the Detroit skyline. Ignoring for a moment the enigmatic quality of cities being “best friends forever”, the appeals are made from the point of view of a concerned friend who wants more communication and interaction than what exists. In *Sites of Apology / Sites of Hope, Broken City Lab* assumes the legitimacy to make public designations and awards. But this assertion is confounded by the unusual nature of the authority asserted: to designate a geographic location as a place of ‘hope’ or ‘apology’.

“Make This Better” engages ambiguity to assert appropriate outcomes that are other than the realities that currently exist. The intervention is framed as a tension between the present and future, where what lies ahead is the possibility of a more desirable state-of-affairs. Ambiguity abounds: what exactly is to be made better is unclear, as is how to make it better, and for whom. In any one setting there are numerous possible ways to interpret what needs improving: physical attributes, social and cultural attributes, the setting itself or perhaps the whole city, or perhaps the world, all of which is applica-

ble and amusing. The possibilities are endless, but what they share is an appeal to an improved future, one whose possibility in the future rests on someone doing something.

Ambiguities blur the boundaries of legitimacy from one structure to the next, from homophobic sensibilities to evocations of childhood comfort, from the banality of advertising to direct appeals to get involved in public policy matters, from separatist lesbian identities to quasi-mythological wonders, from citizen agency to bureaucratic rule. Legibilities, credibilities and appropriatenesses are confounded in different ways in different contexts raising doubts and questions about categories of irrelevancy, constituencies with credibility and appropriate outcomes.

CHAPTER 7 – Case Studies: Aesthetics of Relationality

The relational aspects of communication describe the contexts within which communication takes place and the role of communication in maintaining, creating and destabilizing relationships. In this analysis, I am considering two relational attributes: aesthetic identity, or a sense of belonging; and aesthetic exemplaries, which describe future conditions on which meaning in the present is contingent. These are relational in the sense that a sense of belonging depends on shared values, preferences and experiences – that sharing of which produces the *feeling* of being a member of a group. Collective identity defines relationships of belonging. Exemplary validities manifest in the expectations about and obligations and commitments to others in social contexts, whether they are members of a group or members of another group. An expectation of intimacy and friendliness, for example, will structure an address one way, whereas an expectation of violence will structure an address another way. A commitment to fairness and decency will maintain certain kinds of relations, whereas its absence will in all likelihood maintain other kinds of relations. And so on. The “truths” in question in this sense reside in the nature of the relationships established, maintained and challenged.

Aesthetic Identities in Ladies Sasquatch and Etat d'urgence.

Language derives meaning from the status functions ascribed to people, objects, events and circumstances, some of which take their sensibilities from the integrities of the author — the commitments, obligations and expectations directed at self and others

rooted in the author's expectations of trust. An important sensibility in this regard is a sense of belonging – of acknowledging, creating, maintaining or rejecting shared interests, values, expectations and experiences in such a way that we subjugate our identities into a “we”. The *sensus communis* describes a dimension of communication rooted in the production of a shared sense of belonging, or in other words a collective or social identity.

A sense of belonging describes an affective orientation to trust: trust that self and others can do the things they say they will and trust that they have done the things they say they have done. These are the sedimented “truths” that accrue through experience, that form the basis of expectation of understanding on which communication is grounded, and through which experiencing subjects manifest integrities. “Aesthetics of identity”, as Ferguson says, “asserts the centrality of political judgment in the establishment and endurance of a group identity” (1999, 43-44). Aesthetic identity recognizes that, as Lorraine Code has argued in the context of a feminist critique of dominant epistemologies, communal understanding and the way we position ourselves in relation to other people is foundation for knowing (Code 1991). Who belongs and how – and who doesn't belong and why not – arranges subjectivities in time and space; it distributes sensibilities of identity that fundamentally inform relations within wider structures of belonging, status, privilege, subjugation, and these sensibilities must be rendered in legitimate terms in order to achieve the visibilities required for domination. The conditions of belonging must be rendered legibly, their circumstances of applicability must be credible,

and they must be accepted as appropriate. Conversely, aesthetic challenges to the legitimacies of power can manifest within these categories of meaning through the production of legitimacies associated with subjugated identities.

Ladies Sasquatch generates a sensibility of belonging through the ambiguities of nostalgia produced with textiles, the collectivity of the sasquatches around the fire and the playfulness of the overall installation. Their physical strength and fierceness, and their mythological powers suggest a gathering of strange demi-gods of a kind and to be among them is intimidating, but it is also flattering. The expectation is that audiences must decide in the encounter with feelings of nostalgia, wonder and even fear, if they belong in the gathering. The fearsome qualities of the sculpture are inseparable from materials that evoke comfort, familiarity and childhood reminiscence. The invitation to play seems hard to resist. But to accept this invitation, is to accept on some level the ways *Ladies Sasquatch* rejects dominant, patriarchal forms of understanding — about women, about the sexualization of women, about the visibility of radical lesbian identities, about race, about body size, about indigenous cultures.

One of the identities at play in this installation is Mitchell's own identity as a politically engaged member of a lesbian community:

I make my work for a younger version of myself, in a way, it's about connecting to young women who are politicized, looking for the language, looking for validation -- and they feel a real excitement when they experience the work. (Mitchell, 14).

Her identity as younger self creates exactly the challenge she wants to overcome: to cred-

ibly render radical political lesbian knowledge into the very public culture in which it is condemnable, contemptible and silenced. To “like” the work is to encounter it as appropriate and on some level to accept this identity, at least parts of it, and so in this way by anticipating her audiences on these terms she subtly creates them and makes visible what was invisible:

I’m trying to make work that forces people to look at things that they would rather look away from. So whether it’s female bodies, lesbian existence, feminist politics, my work is about trying to woo people into looking at it. (Mitchell, 5)

And although it is playfulness that draws expected audiences towards the politics and resistant meanings in the work, the destabilizing quality of the subjugated knowledges remains:

It’s not about making queerness palpable or making it normal. It’s not about like gay marriage, that kind of nice queerness, but it’s about making the radical politics still accessible, so they don’t disappear ... that they’re cool. I did a lot of work with fat activism ... the strategies that we would do around fat activism was about making it, like, it’s sexy and cool to be resistant and be activist around the truths that we’d been told about women, and body size, and health, and happiness, and all that stuff. (Mitchell, 22)

Mitchell's production of her own identity and sense of belonging as audience renders visible what in dominant patriarchal terms is the illegitimate experience and knowledge of radical, separatist lesbian cultures. They are rendered legible, at least to the extent that they manifest on terms other than error and folly, and appropriate, at least to the extent that the invitation to play is accepted. By encouraging close inspection, touching and in fact *joining the giants on their platform*, *Ladies Sasquatch* implicates au-

diences into resistant knowledges willingly and within territories of pleasure.

The tactical aesthetics of identity at play in *Etat d'urgence* mobilize on slightly different terms. *Etat d'urgence* creates a structure for possibility that has the potential to invert the shared sensibilities of belonging and exclusion as between homeless and non-homeless populations. The public space occupied by *Etat d'urgence* is both physically and culturally dominated by the homeless, an attribute I can attest to firsthand. The event is structured around a complex engagement with the needs of the homeless – needs in terms of the potential traumas and crises of homelessness, and needs in terms of entertainment, the pleasures of art, of having a community, of having a welcoming public space and the pleasures of sharing in a festival atmosphere. Homeless people attend the festival in the hundreds. A new shared sense of belonging manifests at the site foremost for the homeless who dominate the public space, but also in the many ways homeless and non-homeless interact, share meals, warm together over fire barrels, take workshops, enjoy live performances as audiences and just hang out. A sense of belonging and its limitations (in a wider social sense, we no longer have the 'ship of fools' in which to send away our "undesirables, and must confront the limitations of belonging) is arguably one of the root conditions of homelessness. The social collective has failed to include these people in attending to the most basic of needs, especially in a geographic territory with difficult and life-threatening winters. "Tout inclus" is a clever and revealing didactic: *Etat d'urgence*, more so than in most other circumstances, generates a social reality of inclusion for homeless people. Their shared sense of exclusion is transformed into a

shared sense of belonging.

I would like to share a personal anecdote that helped me to make sense of the aesthetics of identity at play in *Etat d'urgence*. In December 2010, I attended the festival as a member of the general public. The site was crowded. It was obvious to me that I was in a social environment very different from my day-to-day (i.e. middle-class, semi-professional, educated, etc.) and in which, at least initially, I felt somewhat alienated. I looked different. I didn't know anyone. The centres of activity on the site were two fire-barrels at the foot of a large raised stage where, throughout the evening, adult clowns, dancers and musicians performed for the generally rowdy and vocal crowd. The performances were on the whole ribald, and this was greatly appreciated by the group. I loitered near the back, away from the stage, feeling very self-conscious. As I stood quietly observing the festival, numerous older men who were also lingering back from the barrels commented on my jacket, which was a hand-knit Cowichan Siwash coat that I had purchased in a thrift store in Vancouver. The men who approached me (they were all men) recognized and appreciated its handmade quality and knew something about the warmth it offered. The innocuous conversations about my jacket served to bridge the gulf that I was feeling between me and the others, and perhaps for them as well. I slowly relaxed, and in time, after a few conversations about living in Vancouver (where many I spoke to had lived at one time or another) and West Coast winters compared to Montreal, I began to have a feeling of belonging, too. (It didn't occur to me then that my jacket, like the textiles used in Allyson Mitchell's *Ladies Sasquatch*, had evoked a nostalgia and comfort

and perhaps ambiguity about my status and through which our 'othering' could shift to 'togethering'.) I felt in this public place, at least initially, like an outsider, like a visitor to someone else's party. My sense of belonging in society was disrupted in an unprecedented way, and then through my interactions with some of the people at the festival, was rearranged to manifest a shared sense of belonging that included a population of the homeless.

Through a structured experimental community, a large population of homeless people is transformed from invisible/threatening/undesirable/problem, to visible/friendly/enjoyable/community. Their existence as members of society who laugh, enjoy music, contribute to cultural activities, have friendships, and who have fundamental needs that are not being met was rendered legibly for a wider general public. And for those who attended, these sensibilities were rendered credible through direct experience. The continued exclusion of homeless people from society was rendered in inappropriate terms by making the homeless the "vedette":

So you arrive there [at Etat d'urgence] and you're like, what the fuck am I doing here, what is that, what can I do. But then, after a while, you kind of stay, if you can overpass that. At one point, you kind of, you're kind of at ease, you're kind of okay. And at one point, you even like it, because like, you don't have to have a super nice smile, you can really put your, your finger in your nose if you want because everybody's weird so I can be weird too. And, at one point, personally, I feel even better there than in many very nice occasion. I feel like just relaxed, like okay, I can fart, you know. [Roy, 35]

The aesthetics of identity offers a territory of experience through which competing legitimacies can be encountered through a sense of belonging and exclusion,

which are often the foundation for structures of power – for example, the production of national identities, colonial domination, race, class, gender, etc. So, too, with identities that manifest within structures of legitimacy that defy and resist relations of power. Legitimacies of identity take their shapes at least in part from what shared sensibilities are legible, credible and appropriate. Cultural texts can and to some extent must engage in these territories of meaning to influence perceptions of public knowledge.

Aesthetic Exemplaries in The Dominion and Broken City Lab

The last of the four categories of aesthetic experience is exemplary validity, which describes how expectations of understandability can influence the production of discursive truth. Exemplary validities are derived through the status functions, expectations, obligations and commitments inscribed by a speaker/author for and about themselves and towards others through language acts. To make a truth-claim is to act, which accepts/asserts conditions that depend in part on the very obligations, commitments and expectations being asserted within the meanings through which the truth-claim manifests. Expected audiences delimit horizons of potential understanding tethered within these relational conditions. How I makes sense and consistency between past and current experiences, and how I project myself into the future and conditions believed to inhere in those states, reflects my subjective integrity. Power and domination insinuate their way into this complex by asserting fiats of understanding that would direct future social outcomes by having the experiencing subject manifest integrities that perpetuate extant relations of

power. In order for subjective agreement with fiat of power to be realized as a knowledge event, the subjective integrities must be rendered in legitimate terms. Legitimacy depends on legibility, credibility and appropriateness – in this case, of the exemplary conditions in question. These present territories of contestability on aesthetic terms.

As we've seen, one of the central legitimacies being challenged by *The Dominion's* cultural work addresses the appropriateness of certain kinds of human relations — a sensibility that rejects the outcomes of racism, sexism, poverty, environmental degradation, colonialism, the exploitation of human labour as illegitimate and that also asserts the changeability of the structures and relations that produce these outcomes. The “counterpoint to corporate media” for *The Dominion* is in the “work of social movements”, as the masthead says – in being part of social movements driven forward by a sense of what is supposed to be, and what is in fact possible. Exemplary understandings provide the territory of legitimacy from which *Dominion* creators and authors can make assertions that resist relations of power expressed in the status quo. In the article “Migrating justice”, for example, about migrant labour law in Canada, the conditions of “unhappy”, “angry”, “frightened” and “exploited” are inappropriate for migrant workers, an exemplary condition that is denied by existing systems which legitimize all of those outcomes in the interests of companies in need of lower labour costs (Maynard 2010). Also inappropriate, is that the conditions of deprivation that drive men and women to uproot their lives in order to work temporarily in Canada far from families and in less than ideal conditions, may in fact be created in part by the same corporate organizations benefitting from migrant la-

bour law. Canadian mining companies appear to be comfortable doing business in contexts where mass disappearance and political assassination are used to quell political dissent, and where industrial side-effects are poisoning the water supplies of near-by communities (Saunders 2010). Once these experiences have been presented credibly through an objective mode of apprehension, it is not immediately clear why they would be appropriate in that they seem to violate Canadian social and legal standards. In another article, the Canadian government's legal jurisdiction over the geographic territory of Canada is complicated by Aboriginal title, which prompts some First Peoples' organizations to question the legitimacy of decisions made at the G20 Summit and the Canadian government's authority to make decisions on behalf of First Peoples (Paley 2010).

In the letter from the editors, *The Dominion* lays out many of the exemplary conditions at play:

There are alternatives to these intolerable inequities – alternatives promoted by civil society, representatives from the global South, Indigenous peoples, the organized poor and migrant and refugee communities, who will be gathering for counter summits and demonstrations in Toronto. These people do not wield ready-made institutional powers, or the fawning attention of a corporate press corp. But they have something that the G8 or G20 do not possess: legitimacy. They represent the views and hopes of ordinary people the world over, and they are building political movements to prise control from undemocratic international bodies ... [Dominion 2010, 3]

The editors go on to describe a document of proposals to address “runaway climate change” created at a gathering of 30,000 people from the constituencies they have identified:

If this example becomes a democratic, anti-capitalist model for action on the climate, why not also put it to use remaking the global economy? Instead of blueprints designed by a fenced off caucus of the elite, imagine “An Agreement of the People” ... to transform the economic order. [Dominion 2010, 3]

What is exemplary, here, is the way these particular constituencies – those who appear to fare the worst under existing structures of power – are implicated in governance. Contrary to a more general and perhaps popular perception of the world's poor and disaffected, the editors of *The Dominion* instantiate them within relations of power where the seat of authority over decision-making rests with them. It is to this “authority” in a sense that *The Dominion* directs its rendering of truths about the world, and in this way also constitutes an identity, a shared identity among readers as those with an authority to determine these political outcomes. To understand what legitimacies are rendered in *The Dominion*, I suggest, is to subsume your identity into this authorized 'agreement of the people'.

In the editorial, the editors write that “The articles in this issue, we hope, offer reasons to become angry and inspired” (Dominion 2010). The respondent expressed a similar appeal:

I want them [the readers] to get upset, but also come away from that feeling both more informed on this specific topic and also feel empowered about being able to use that information somehow. I think that's one of the things we definitely try to do with the special issues, that it's not just about information: it's also hoping that people take information that empowers some either individually or within communities to use that information. And so, when I say “get upset”, it's because when we select stories to run and the topics that we cover, it's topics that we feel are under reported and that present conflicts and problems within society that we hope people take action on. [McSorley, 50]

There is in this an expectation that audiences will be outraged at the effects of power described, and will become inspired and will act politically, together. *The Dominion* is part of the constitution of new relations of “community resistance” (McSorley, 14).

In the cultural work of *Broken City Lab*, the exemplary conditions are similarly oriented towards public responsibility and authority:

I really am interested in understanding how somebody seeing our work might make them want to do something [on] their own scale ... I'm interested in how our work can act as a prompt for someone to get curious about something in front of them, because our work is about things that make us curious in front of ourselves ... [Langois, 18]

... maybe we should have a sense of obligation about a community or about a place, being active in it ... [it would be interesting to consider if] everyone had an obligation to do something at a scale that was appropriate to them — that would change at least how they experience the city. I mean, what would that look like on the other side? It might be a lot of community gardens and poorly painted safety signs, but maybe the people who did that would feel empowered and that would be very helpful to communities, I think. Obligation in that sense becomes important. [Langois, 20-21]

The ambiguities rendered in their work — in *Text-in-Transit*, ‘Make This Better ...’, *Sites of Apology / Sites of Hope* and *Cross Border Communication*, each in their own way demand that audiences participate imaginatively; for example, how to make sense of illuminating a message on the side of a building that refers to Detroit as “BFF”, or an appeal in a bus advertisement to “Please don’t leave.” Particular footholds of meaning have been withheld, legibilities are in question, and to make sense audiences must participate in the production of sensibility. And because of how interventions are located in the cityscape, it is a sensibility concerning their own identities as residents of Windsor and the place of Windsor.

These exemplary states are oriented within structures of dissenting legitimacies that in their discursive ways argue against the bleak futures and lack of opportunity in Windsor, against dense and insensitive bureaucracies, against unresponsive elected officials. The exemplary validities at work in *Cross Border Communication*, for example, ignore the official channels of city-to-city communication and manifest a direct communication between larger populations, an appeal of the people to the people. There is in this a manifestation of popular agency and assertion of credibility to speak on behalf of the city of Windsor. Without the future relationalities of an involved public, much of the ambiguity of what *Broken City Lab* creates would indeed struggle to overcome being understood as nonsense.

Their identity as “artists” and appeal to art world audiences, also manifests exemplary conditions. “Artwork creates space for conversation,” says Langois (Langois, 4). Public knowledge may be in question, but the approach to toppling its legitimacies is through facilitating public participation in rendering new forms of knowledge. The methodology reflects the expectations of relationality in play. *Broken City Lab* cultural texts are not rationally debating the legitimacy of an alternative reality in Windsor, but rather undermining the very means by which such “realities” are generated in public cultures by instantiating alternative relations rooted in public participation. In *Sites of Hope / Sites of Apology*, the understandings produced depended entirely on active engagement by audiences in the production of meaning. And for those who encounter the text as non-participating audiences, the exemplary conditions necessary for making sense of hanging

ribbons on empty lots manifest both a willingness to take responsibility for public failure, and to take responsibility for (re)fashioning a future. Of course, “refashioning” future doesn’t really make sense, because of course the future remains undetermined, but relations of domination operate in just this way by determining future states through fiats of legitimacy that over determine outcomes. *The Dominion* and *Broken City Lab* are tactically using exemplary conditions to challenge conditions of power.

The Dominion’s aesthetics instantiate exemplary conditions that render many outcomes of existing social structures as inappropriate. The legitimacy of power is undetermined through exemplary conditions of outrage at injustice and active participation in undoing the manifestations of power. Relations of domination are rendered in ephemeral terms through the exemplaries of political activism. Similarly, *Broken City Lab* grounds its doubts about dominant narratives describing Windsor as a hopeless place in the inappropriateness of excluding public participation and imagination from the determining processes of Windsor’s future. This place doesn’t make sense, *Broken City Lab* seems to be saying, unless the residents involve themselves in its meanings. Public imagination is the territory of intervention. Such gestures have the sensibilities they do precisely because the exemplary conditions of Windsor’s future involves public imagination. After all, who wants to live in a hopeless place? *Broken City Lab* uses the safe and familiar legitimacies of advertising in its efforts to scramble dominant assumptions about place. And they assert a credibility of public participation by the very existence of their interventions. To encounter a *Broken City Lab* text in the cityscape is to encounter doubt

about who has and who can have the authority to speak publicly. To doubt a fiat of power is to rob it of its significance in the exercise of domination.

In summary, in both cases, an expectation of future involvement by a general public in the affairs of state and in shaping social reality grounds, on the one hand, legibilities of enigma that demand imaginative participation in constructing meanings about place, and on the other, the ephemeral qualities of structures of domination that produce inappropriate outcomes. Those with power experience social reality in this way: as something ephemeral, changeable, subject to their designing interests. Additionally, in the case of *The Dominion*, an obligation and commitment to take responsibility for social outcomes renders injustice in inappropriate terms. Something that produces injustice that can be changed must be changed and will be changed on the authority of the people effected by the outcomes. It is impossible to prove or disprove a commitment, obligation or expectation because their meanings rest in the future, in exemplary terms. But it is equally impossible to render meanings through language without these kinds of integrities. The paradox does not render these sensibilities meaningless or in error, but rather indicates a quality of meaning outside of the rational confines of empirical justification – in what I am describing as aesthetic experience.

Conclusion

Despite their widely divergent media and methods of engagement, each of the cultural examples under consideration — the news coverage of *The Dominion*, the public art interventions of *Broken City Lab*, the sculptures of *Ladies Sasquatch* and the festival for the homeless *Etat d'urgence* — is engaged in making kinds of experience visible in opposition to the hegemonic forms of discursive “truth” circulating as public knowledge. They are producing their dissenting texts for circulation in some version of the Canadian hegemon. What exactly manifests as hegemonic is necessarily fluid reflecting ongoing struggles for cultural, social, economic and political dominance. Nor is empirical confirmation of the patterns of power being challenged necessary for the purposes herein of considering aesthetic tactics. The preceding analysis could also be applied to an account described as fictional within which there were established epistemic criteria of meaning, power, etc., for example, to representations of cultural dissent within a novel or film. The question in each case is how do authors/creators use aesthetic experience to navigate competing structures of legitimacy in their attempts to render experiences resisting the effects of power in meaningful terms.

That said, and taking our cue from the authors/creators themselves, the hegemon into which these cultural gestures are made will be familiar to many: (i) public discourse that tends to exclude the experiences of the least powerful and most marginalized while representing the interests of corporate, military and state institutions; (ii) pro-capitalist, market-based decision making; (iii) Western liberal democracies that perpetuate colonial relationships with Aboriginal people; (iv) the disempowerment of youth; (v) municipal

settings (i.e. Windsor) where policy decisions are made by political and cultural elites (i.e. the mayor, city officials, city departments and local universities) and the opinions of residents are rarely sought and barely valued; (vi) the idea of Windsor as a post-industrial mess with a bleak future and few opportunities; (vii) heteronormative valorization of able-bodied, thin, sexualized female bodies; (viii) homophobic erasures of lesbian histories, experiences and politics; (ix) scientific monopolies on truth; (x) pornographic representation of lesbian identity; (xi) art institutions that reflect patriarchal interests and validate male artists over female artists; (xii) political dissent grounded in fear and anger; (xiii) disrespect, dislike and disregard of the homeless; (xiv) a society that allows conditions of homelessness to flourish.

The Dominion, of course, is the most recognizably journalistic case study in the way it mimics traditional professional forms of journalism – use of objective modes of apprehension, the use of sources and quotation, neutrality of voice, reduction of ambiguity, etc. But all of the cases share attributes attributed to news: they are either asserting “truths” or challenging them; they produce texts for non-expert audiences and general publics; they are making commentary on social affairs of a nature relevant to questions of self-governing; they emerge from within institutional and organizational contexts oriented towards publicizing information; and they are each adamant in their unwillingness to engage in public deception.

What does distinguish these examples from traditional notions of journalism is their explicit engagements within the territories of epistemic uncertainty that journalism usually avoids and obscures in its efforts to persuade audiences in the “truth” of its work. These are the ‘absent integrities’ of the so-called voice of neutrality and disinterest from

which news-truths traditionally emerge. The conceit of an absent integrity is just that: a convenient fiction that obscures the ways discursive meaning depends on aesthetic techniques to convince audiences in the “truth” of its messages and to encourage particular structures of legitimacy. *The Dominion* in this sense serves as a test case. The use of an objective mode of apprehension is overt, as is the regulation and minimizing of ambiguity as strategy for meaning production. Reflected in these techniques are the legitimacies of power that emerge from rational, empirical conditions – those described earlier: the kinds of dominance asserted through colonial structures of centralized authority, equivalential valuation (i.e. through marketization), disembodied forms of meaning, etc. But *The Dominion* makes other choices that aesthetically distinguish its work from traditional news. The sense(s) of belonging encouraged in *The Dominion* is more tacitly engaged; it is, as I've said, an identity of authority inextricable from the exemplary conditions within which people's lives are not expendable in the production of wealth and destroyed by dominant systems of social organization such as capitalism. *The Dominion* is expected to make sense to those who take responsibility for the effects of power, who appreciate that relations of power are changeable, and who want to see social outcomes that work against injustice perpetrated against those with less power. It is difficult to verify the “truth” of public authority. But in *The Dominion's* reports “truth” is verified with the same rational and empirical criteria that professional journalists advocate. What distinguishes their stories, say, from those in the *Globe and Mail*, is that *The Dominion* produces news through structures of meaning-production whose legitimacies depend also in part on including the voices of those who benefit least from the effects of power. The shared sensibilities of understanding expected among readerships include an authority to change

public policy and treat those who suffer most from the effects of power with respect.

The title of this dissertation contains a playful synecdoche: the question of aesthetics in this study ranges far beyond traditional aesthetic concerns with 'beauty'. Aesthetic experience as discussed here means the pre-linguistic, pre-cognitive affects of cultural encounter — 'affect' in the sense of autonomic physiological response such as changes to galvanic skin frequencies, heart rates, breathing patterns, etc. (Massumi 2002). 'Affect' in the raw and instantaneous upwelling of sensation before the cognitive apparatus of reason, ideology, logic, meaning, etc. begins to generate understanding. As Fenner (2002) has argued, traditional approaches to the aesthetic more narrowly refer to a system of art appraisal that decontextualizes meaning in order to valorize formal attributes. In my framework, this is more rightfully understood as a 'mode of apprehension' and is only one aspect of a more encompassing understanding of the non-rational and pre-cognitive elements that arise in communicative events. The aesthetic encompasses experience in excess of cognition and as such presents the possibility of extending the knowable (Gunn 2002).

Raymond Williams' legacy includes a rather devastating view of aesthetics as an alienating ideology reflecting a dissociation of cultural artifact from its social, political and in particular laboured conditions (Fluck 2002). What renders Williams' analysis more narrow than perhaps he intended, argues Fluck, is an awareness of the aesthetic as an historically moving target whose complexities have been conflated into historically contingent terms. Williams wanted to reunite art with its social circumstances, and in my approach to aesthetic experience, I offer no disagreement; indeed, as Fluck argues, a genealogical critique of power suggests — again, I agree — that aesthetics is "another pow-

er game” (p. 82). But this makes aesthetics all the more interesting from my perspective. Genealogical power is rooted in epistemology, and in Western terms epistemology is grounded in reason. Aesthetic experience is not. “There is a crack in everything”, songwriter Leonard Cohen intones, “that’s how the light get’s in”.¹⁵ Aesthetic experience suggests cracks in the bulwark of rational hegemony, and as such, it suggests avenues of approach for challenging the relations of power from which the bulwark has been formed.

Aesthetics can of course be used to expand conditions of power; as I’ve alluded to, we need not stray too far from our own histories to encounter fascist potentials in the aestheticization of politics (for an analysis of the aesthetics of racism in North America, see Kang 1996). These would, I suppose, be *strategies* of aesthetics – means of achieving “force-relationships” grounded within their own territories of propriety as differentiated from the *tactics* of the weak, (de Certeau 1984, xix). The cases in question in this study are tactically engaged in exploring the potential for aesthetic experience to confound the expectations of power bound in the conditions of knowledge.

My discussion of each aesthetic tactic focused on two cases, but each case in fact evidenced all categories of aesthetic experience to varying degrees. This is, I suggest, one of the strengths of the analytic framework being proposed: a means of unbundling the complexities of what is often obliquely referenced in undifferentiated terms. The ‘modes of apprehension’ engaged by *The Dominion* and *Etat d’urgence* have been described: as objective and disinterested verifiable fact for the former, and as experimental, improvisational and experiential for the latter,. But the other cases also have modes of apprehension at work. *Ladies Sasquatch* engages art sensibilities through gallery presentations, but

15 From Leonard Cohen’s “Anthem” (1992), on the album *The Future*. EMI

then disrupts them with her “messy craft” and overtly lesbian sensibilities and in the overt playfulness of the figures. *Broken City Lab* engages in modes that reflect the urban palimpsest of advertising, graffiti and municipal signage, only to scramble their sensibilities into art and even activist structures of legitimacy. These scrambled sensibilities create ambiguities, the second category of aesthetic experience. The tactical use of ambiguity is most evident in *Broken City Lab* and *Ladies Sasquatch*, but it is also clearly present in *The Dominion* and *Etat d’urgence*, the former reflecting dominant objective conventions of journalism to reduce ambiguity as much as possible, and the latter engaging in the confounding possibilities of a cultural festival for the homeless. ATSA’s ambiguities create the doubt-space within which its inversion of belonging can manifest, i.e. where homeless experience comes to dominate public culture, if only for a few days.

A sense of belonging is the third category of aesthetic experience. *Ladies Sasquatch* and *Etat d’urgence*, as previously discussed, create public space for subjugated senses of belonging – the identities of radical lesbian and the identity of homelessness – rendered in such a way that the general public who encounter them can share these subjugated senses of belonging. But there are identities at play in the work of *The Dominion* and *Broken City Lab*, their shared senses of belonging both suggesting an identity of public authority. These identities are inextricable from the exemplary states being suggested, the fourth category of aesthetic experience as described, and that draw shared senses of belonging towards conditions where audiences create and shape public policy. But there are exemplaries at work in *Ladies Sasquatch* and *Etat d’urgence* as well. *Ladies Sasquatch* only makes sense in an exemplary setting where aspects of radical lesbian sensibility has a place in public culture; and *Etat d’urgence* only makes sense under conditions

where homeless people are accepted on par with the general public rather than as a category to exclude and villify.

To say all of this in a slightly different way, we can use the framework described to offer an aesthetic profile for each cultural example. *The Dominion* engages the traditional mode of apprehension of objectivity and traditional emphasis on eliminating ambiguity to generate credibility and legibility for experiences that resist the effects of power, and that frame the suffering of those who benefit least from public policies (of capitalism, liberal democracy, etc.) as inappropriate through an identity of authority to (re)make policy that extends respect and dignity to those subjugated to power's designs.

Broken City Lab uses common modes of apprehension (advertising in *Text-in-Transit*; graffiti in *Cross Border Communication*) to overcome expected hostilities to 'art', which they undermine with ambiguous messages that demand public participation imaginatively to construct meanings within a sense of belonging to a city where public opinion counts, all of which makes sense in a future where the residents of Windsor can realize their own dreams and expectations in a city they have helped to create. Public participation is rendered credibly by the intervention itself – by the assertion of *Broken City Lab* that it has the authority to take up public space with its messages, opinions, ideas, questions. The messages themselves, which only make sense with the participation by the readers who encounter them in public spaces, make public participation in (re)imagining Windsor's futures appropriate.

Ladies Sasquatch brings its audiences into a playful and comforting encounter with the subjugated experiences of separatist, radical lesbian identity – an invitation to play, to be delighted and awed by the mythological apparitions whose legibilities of

meaning and even presence are conceptually ambiguous, and yet whose evocation of nostalgia and childhood reminiscences are grounded in qualities of female togetherness and sexuality that defy dominant sensibilities for women. The mode of apprehension is both playful and through the sensibilities of art instantiated by a gallery setting. The ambiguities instigated by the textiles serve to make approachable and comforting what might otherwise be threatening, and allow general publics to share a sense of belonging within a radical lesbian identity, all of which only makes sense in a public culture where the elements of radical lesbian experience being expressed are a welcome part of public culture.

And finally, *Etat d'urgence* engages in a mode of experimental community where homeless people come first: physically, culturally, politically, socially, and where the social outcomes are improvisational and embodied in the experiences of those who attend. As a cultural festival, whose theme is the "all-inclusive" vacation package, the experimental community retains legibility in a way that, for example, a homeless protest might not. The ambiguities are evident in the dependence on improvisation. Anything *could* happen, as evidenced by local police sometimes using the festival as a tool for law enforcement (as a *de facto* and humanitarian 'drunktank'). The credibilities of whatever meanings are produced lie in the direct personal experiences had by participants at the festival – in a sense, the ultimate form of 'news' in that it is the experience itself and not just a retelling of it. The dominant shared sense of belonging is that of homeless people and their sensibilities – the park is theirs for a few days of food, shelter, laughter, medical counselling, sitting by a fire barrel, laughing at the adult clowns, dancing to live musical performances, etc. It reflects the exemplary condition where homeless people are welcomed into society rather than shunned, and where the general public cares about home-

less people as people they share life experiences with. What isn't appropriate at the festival is to treat homeless people with disrespect, to ignore the problems of homelessness, and to exclude and silence their experiences.

Together, these cases offer a limited but instructive glimpse into the complexities of aesthetic tactics engaged discursively to express dissent. They reveal aesthetic approaches to questions of public knowledge, and there is much here that muddies the waters of dominant perceptions and hegemonic understanding. An aesthetics of discursive legitimacy emphasizes the epistemic limitations of traditional strategies for popular truth-telling (such as those used in journalism) and points instead towards an approach to managing the plurality of language in its games. For example, limiting semiotic potential is an important epistemological function of news aesthetic – themes, rhetorical strategies, narrative structures, syntax — all play a role in controlling and trying to control what exactly an audience will do with a text. Assessments like those of Broersma (2010) which describe news as a kind of performance emphasize that, at least in part, these techniques are focused on establishing a trust relationship with an audience, and that “truth” here emerges from a process of successfully making a truth-claim, i.e. that in doing so transforms the claim into “truth”.

The legitimacy of public understanding is of course related to wider political questions about how authority balances its needs with popular desire and the role of dissent in democratic contexts. Toby Miller uses the term “technologies of truth” to describe the way popular desire, governmental interest in regulatory control and market forces manifest in their encounter through what he calls cultural citizenships that reflect meaning, membership and governance (Miller 1998). These, too, are discursive truths,

but Miller's insight links social and political *identifies* to the actions taken in cultural contexts. Each of the cases in this study is arguing against the status quo by articulating subjugated experiences in such a way that what is and is not subjugated comes into question. They are operating in a zone of what Michael Taussig calls "epistemic murk", an epistemological twilight where what is known cannot be articulated (1999). Epistemic murk is the "strategic ground of the society's power" where subjects are created who know what to know and what not to know; it enables transgression through poetic syntax that oscillates between, as Surin says, "metaphor and mimesis", a technique of undoing or destabilizing the conditions of "truth" asserted by relations of domination (Surin 2001, 206- 207; Taussig 1999). The cases in question in this study are trying to articulate what in a certain context shouldn't be known and shouldn't be said, and they must address the conditions of their inarticulation. Epistemic uncertainty might be the strategic ground for society's power, but it also the tactical ground for cultural resistance and dissent. An aesthetic critique of power tactically engages uncertainty to assert sensibilities which transcend the conditions of possibility for domination.

Discursive power finds its condition of possibility in the potential for resistance (inherent in language) through reappropriation, resignification, disidentification (Munoz 1999; Raby 2005). As Judith Butler has argued, social subjects are interpellated: they must reiterate the relations of their recognition in order to exist (Butler 1993), just as accounting for transgressions of social norms depends in part on an awareness of the norms that have been transgressed (Zelditch 2001). These are the visible 'fiats of power' (Gordon 2002). Resistance depends on familiarity with the social structures of power: to enact recognizable identities and acknowledge the prevailing conditions of legitimacy; and

to identify the “cracks and vulnerabilities of institutionalized power” in order to exploit them (Ewick and Silbey 2003, 1330).

The framework for aesthetic analysis being proposed in this dissertation can be likened to a map of potential “cracks”. The consolidation of meaning through which relations of power normalize their operations into 'habits of power' is, to a large extent, a process of legitimation: producing agreement about “truths” which do all the things they need to do to extend particular social relations of power (interpellate particular subjects, justify particular activities and policies, discredit experiences that resist the effects of power, limit possibilities for outcomes. Understanding has ontological dimensions (rooted in the production of integrities, as described). The degree to which ‘fiats of power’ are legible and appropriate, and the conditions of their emergence perceived as credible, will inform the visibilities of the prevailing conditions of power. When things are murky, visibilities can be transformed. What seems like one thing in the fog of epistemic uncertainty might be another, which offers opportunities for subjugated knowledges to manifest in cultural forms without immediately and *in toto* being dismissed as simply wrong. Ewick and Sibley (2003) call it “institutional indecipherability”, the manifestation of officially unreadable meanings. The relevance of an aesthetic of ambiguity as a tactic, here, is obvious. Rendering the legibility, credibility and/or appropriateness of either the assertions of dissenting integrities (or the ‘fiats of power’ that would discredit them) in ambiguous terms creates a territory of doubt within which transgressions can at least momentarily flourish.

Modernity frames competing epistemologies “as errors, mere beliefs or romantic yearnings” and in doing so asserts an hierarchical relation of superiority (Aparicio and

Blaser 2008, 64). This is a foundation, for example, of colonial dominance, and describes more generally the conditions for structures of power. But this in itself does not make subjugated experiences disappear. Aparicio and Blaser identify attributes which to their observation are shared by the insurrection of subjugated knowledges: (i) the defense of social and cultural differences linked to territory and autonomy; (ii) “the rejection of the modern state and capitalist market as organizing vectors of social life” (2008, 67); and (iii) a framework for political action grounded in the co-adjusting of multiple experiences to produce knowledge that is relational, emergent and contextual. This is far from an exhaustive list (for example, feminist epistemologies that reject the autonomy of reason, the division between fact and value, and objective viewpoints (Code 1991; Larrabee 2006; Smith 1990; 1993; 1999); and queer epistemologies that assert fragmented, contrary and fluctuating subjectivities and thus centers for knowing in perpetual flux (Hammers and Brown 2004)), but we can see elements of these insurrectional epistemic attributes in the cases in question – in the co-adjusting of experience at work in *The Dominion's* participatory structures, in the levels of community engagement required to produce meanings in *Etat d'urgence* and the cultural work of *Broken City Lab*; in the defense of cultural and social difference linked to autonomy reflected in *Ladies Sasquatch*; in the rejection of state logic and capitalist markets reflected in *The Dominion's* news coverage; in the emergent and contextual forms of knowledge produced through the experimental community created by *Etat d'urgence*.

Epistemological resistance must overcome the conditions of its illegitimacy, and aesthetic experience offers a suitably “murky” epistemic domain of meaning through which to mobilize and assert alternative legitimacies: those of lesbian collectivity, of so-

cial realities that welcome rather than exclude homeless people, of indigenous sovereignty, of social structures that alleviate rather than create poverty, of public participation in social and political outcomes. The aesthetics of ambiguity and modes of apprehension influence the representational aspects of communication, and the aesthetics of identity and exemplaries influence relational dimensions of communication. Together, these categories of aesthetic experience help to explain how relationships of power are mobilized and resisted through the affective, pre-cognitive experiences manifest in cultural texts – and in particular, in cultural texts making truth-claims and/or commentary on social reality.

The so-called “crisis” in journalism is at least in part a response to the erosion of traditional journalism’s monopolies over what constitutes legitimate “truth” in public culture. The tabloidization of news and the rise of infotainment fuel pessimism about the long-term quality and reliability of public information, but these concerns by themselves overlook aesthetic and epistemic changes occurring coincident with the rise of online, networked cultures that have allowed and arguably encourage both wider access to and a proliferation of non-traditional forms of commentary on social reality. Publics are making their own cultural texts in unprecedented ways (Benkler 2004; Jenkins 2006). And they are turning to these and other non-traditional news sources (including blogging, animation, graphic novels, video art, documentary, comedic talk shows, dramatic fiction, theatre) for indexical commentary on social reality (Baym 2007; Bird 2009; Dahlgren 2009; Jones 2009). Some of this diversifying cultural engagement can be understood through the lens of aesthetic experience: monopolies long held by professional news outlets over the style and form of public information are disintegrating.

My investigation has been concerned explicitly with the *production* of truth-claims — their reception, while important, is one step removed from my investigation into how *making* truth-claims entangles authors/creators in legitimacies of power in part through the anticipatory tactics of making sense to expected audiences. My focus is on the event of subjective encounter with competing structures of legitimacy: those established discursively by extant relations of domination, and those reflecting emergent structures of legitimacy coincident with subjugated experiences. Legitimacy describes the nexus between power and “truth” where the ‘fiats of power’ are meted out through conditions of legibility, credibility and appropriateness. What may strike some as controversial is the element of agency this model suggests is at play in navigating terms of legitimacy, but power obtains its legitimacies through these very agreements by those subject to its relations. The conditions of truth, which reflect relations of power, in our telling of truths entangle us in commitments and obligations — the building blocks of language and aspects of social reality through which we manifest relations and perception. An aesthetics of legitimacy helps to explain the cultural terms on which the eventualization of power and truth can be interrupted, reordered and reassembled through epistemologies of resistance, indigenous insurrection, performative disruption, disidentification — however it manifests, but in terms that successfully navigate the Scylla of reasonable truth and the Charybdis and irrational falsehood. There *are* more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in Western rational philosophies and an aesthetic analysis offers compelling insight to how some of the complexities manifest in the tension between communication, power and truth are being creatively engaged to trip up the conventional legitimacies of power.

Where this leads us — or where it could lead us — is towards a substantive reconsideration of what “truth” can and should look like, sound like and feel like. And this returns the discussion to its origins in the templates of journalism for manifesting “truth” in public culture. If the news already has ontological dimensions, then admitting them and exploring how they manifest truth-experiences might produce exciting and innovative styles of truth-telling. This is already happening — through dramatic television, theatre, and art practices like those considered herein — but rarely is it considered within the siloed discourses of journalism proper. Imagine, for example, a news room that had an in-house theatre company, or a newscast staffed by video artists. It is not a matter of replacing one style for another, but rather an opportunity for expanding the aesthetic palette of news-making beyond the overly narrow and politically compromised style of objective neutrality. It will necessitate, however — and this is no doubt part of the reason for journalism’s deep hesitation to explore the conditions of its own legitimacies — an excavation of the legitimacies of power reflected and perpetuated by traditional journalism. There is likely little interest within traditional news organizations like *The Globe and Mail* or the CBC for epistemic validities rooted in experiences contrary to the organizing logics of statehood and capital. And yet these may be the very experiences that can help us make sense of, on the one hand, the on-going crisis in journalism, and on the other, more broadly, some of the fractures of sensibility opening up in Western social and cultural experience. “Post-western” has entered the vocabulary, and it seems worthwhile paying such a notion heed (Haber 2009).

Another avenue of future inquiry lies within cultures of dissensus themselves. The few examples considered herein are but a fragment of a wide, diverse and historical-

ly deep, aesthetically sophisticated engagement with conditions of truth, power and legitimacy. These are the proving ground for aesthetic innovation in the production of public knowledge. The tactical aspect of my analysis looks to the aesthetic techniques of cultural dissent for engaging with and challenging legitimacies of power. In considering public discourses, for example, how might epistemic limitations tied to relations of domination be undermined, questioned, rendered more permeable?

All cognition has an embodied, para-cognitive component. The aesthetic dimensions of communication offer a structure for understanding, at least in part, how power organizes its knowledge requirements through these affective experiences. It presents an approach to news that willingly embraces the eventualization of news-truth, not in the interests of discrediting journalism, but just the opposite: in the interests of journalism's traditional ideal of revealing "truths". Understanding the structures of legitimacy at work in the production of journalism discourse should release journalists from an overly narrow and in all likelihood implicit assertion of particular arrangements of power. It is, at least according to the genealogical analysis at work in this study, impossible to avoid these relations of power. An aesthetic analysis can reveal the conditions of legitimacy from which these relations emerge.

The time is ripe for new forms of journalism that are not crippled by their aesthetic naiveté, and judging by changing cultural practices, at least in Western settings, audiences are hungry for such cultural opportunities. And the time is equally ripe for aesthetically sophisticated challenges to the legitimacies of domination. Pandora's box of aesthetic pleasures and dangers in cultural forms has been opened in an age of digitally networked spectacles, and it is getting harder and harder to fool even some of the people

all of the time - harder, that is, for traditional news organizations and their narrowly construed and politically expedient forms of professional truth. In the rush to squeeze out falsity, inaccuracy, ideology and propaganda that informed the ground from which our contemporary visions of professional journalism emerged, the aesthetic dimensions were intentionally or inadvertently swept under the empirical rug. A convention of style thus came to be conflated with the social value of indexicality, and the style became part of the “truth”.

In any event, I am a late messenger and this is a late message. These changes are well underway. The so-called ‘crisis in journalism’ reflects at least some of the unbridled popularity and proliferation of alternative aesthetic strategies acceptable to audiences as forms of information about states-of-affairs in the world. A better understanding of the dynamic between aesthetics and “truth” in popular culture may help to explain why such shifting sensibilities are not only *not* fundamentally destabilizing in any political, social or intellectual sense, but rather can be viewed as a welcome loosening of a form of epistemic monopoly long held by the guilds of news-makers over what counts as “real” in public discourse.

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