

Beasley

The
Political Life of
Sensation

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CONTENTS

Illustrations xi

Grazie xiii

PROLOGUE: Narratocracy and the Contours of
Political Life i

ONE: From *Nomos* to *Nomad*: Kant, Deleuze, and
Rancière on Sensation 21

TWO: The Piazza, the *Edicola*, and the Noise of the
Utterance 45

THREE: Machiavelli's Theory of Sensation and Florence's
Vita Festiva 74

FOUR: The Viewing Subject: Caravaggio, Bacon, and
The Ring 96

FIVE: "You're Eating Too Fast!": Slow Food's Ethos
of *Convivium* 123

EPILOGUE: "The Photographs Tell It All": On an
Ethics of Appearance 149

Notes 155

Bibliography 189

Index 201

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PROLOGUE

Narratocracy and the Contours of Political Life

The distinction between touch and sight are unknown in primordial perception. It is only as a result of the science of the body that we learn to distinguish between our senses. MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

There is nothing quite like the sensation that accompanies an idea. The idea doesn't have to be particularly sophisticated, or even elaborate. It can be as simple as figuring out exactly the right gift to give someone for his or her birthday, or how to respond to a challenging essay question. But when it strikes you, it invades your life. All of a sudden, something that didn't have either shape or texture begins to take form. You read a phrase and think "*les mots justes!*" Or you come across an image in a recipe book, a movie, or a YouTube video and exclaim "it's perfect!" The idea affects you at diverse registers of experience: It has a sound, you can see it, touch it, taste it, and sometimes even smell it. Connections are drawn that hadn't occurred to you, and you become convinced of the concreteness of your thought formation. Something as vaporous and ethereal as a rumination is transformed into a palpable representation, and you

allow yourself to experience, not only the material impact of that representation, but also the intensity that accompanies the transformation itself. In short, you are captured by an appearance and the indeterminable conviction that accompanies the moment of capture that transects you. *The Political Life of Sensation* explores these dimensions of aesthetic experience and their political potential.

Such experiences, though frequent, are short lived because the intensity of the moment passes rather quickly. We are also suspicious of them: these are experiences about particular things that often don't make sense to us, or at the very least if the sensation persists, we try to make sense of it by fitting it into some kind of context or overarching life-schema. Speaking nonsense, for instance, is perceived as an unwelcome failure that needs to be overcome with better thinking, more deliberation, and the kind of storytelling that will help make sense of the world and justify our place in it. But the thing about the activity of sense making is that it always takes sense itself for granted; we always already know the shape and sound an utterance must have in order for it to have meaning or to count as political speech; we are never really content in addressing nonsense as we rarely feel comfortable with its disruptions. And yet, moments of sensation punctuate our everyday existence, and in doing so, they puncture our received wisdoms and common modes of sensing.

In this book I examine ways in which sensation interrupts common sense. By sensation I mean neither sense nor perception (though both are crucially involved), but rather the heterology of impulses that register on our bodies without determining a body's nature or residing in any one organ of perception. In this respect, I consider sensation to be an experience of unrepresentability in that a sensation occurs without having to rely on a recognizable shape, outline, or identity to determine its value. Though we may not have fixed strategies for representing a sensation, we can invent or configure ways of relating the experience it affords (assuming we decide it's an experience worth relating). The limits posed by sensation's unrepresentability thus interrupt our conventional ways of perceiving the world and giving it value. I argue that such moments of interruption (or what I will variously call disarticulation or disfiguration) are political

moments because they invite occasions and actions for reconfiguring our associational lives. My ambition in these pages is to examine the forces of interruption and reconfiguration that, I argue, comprise the aesthetico-political dimensions of democratic life.

Politics happens when a relation of attachment or detachment is formed between heterological elements: it is a part-taking in the activities of representation that renders perceptible what had previously been insensible.¹ When chocolate bakers leave their shops to enact public displays of chocolate preparation in the piazzas of Italy in order to protest the standardization of taste by the European community (see chapter 2), a convergence of heterological elements ensues (i.e., the bakers, the chocolate, the piazzas, the passersby, the mouth) that renders perceptible a new political subjectivity: the tasting subject.² Flavor—not speech—turns the mouth into an organ of political action, and the piazza is transformed into a space for taste. This potential simultaneity of dissimilars is the irrational truth of democratic life. We think that contrarities cannot coexist unless they are made compatible; yet democratic politics perseveres in its insistence that any two or more people, groups, images, identities, subjectivities, and so forth, can persist simultaneously. One could go so far as to suggest that heterology is the ontological condition of democratic politics.

But before such political relations may be forged, before things are rendered perceptible, an interruption of previous forms of relating occurs. This book examines the dynamics of such interruptions when there is a disarticulation of our organoleptic correspondences.³ With this in mind, *The Political Life of Sensation* is also about the activities of disfiguration and reconfiguration of the sensible. By "sensible" I mean both "what makes sense" and "what can be sensed." Though most of us live our lives with the confidence that things, values, and other lives circulate around us with some continuity, we nonetheless also experience moments of breakdown, when the certitudes of circulation collapse. These moments can be at once tragic or comic, fill us with despair or pleasure, give us insight or distract our trains of thought. Whatever the case may be, they are moments that exceed the limits that structure our daily living, and they interrupt

the assurances that guarantee the slumber of subjectivity. They are for these reasons ethical moments, not because they are rule bound or normative, but because they compel us to relinquish our attachments and acknowledge that our subjectivities are inconsistent and open to repetitions of articulation. They are instances of what Michel Foucault refers to as *ethopoetic* forms of knowledge “concerning things, the world, the gods and men, but whose effect and function are to change the subject’s being.”⁴

Aesthetic theory and criticism are central to our appreciation of such ethopoetic moments, especially as they relate to questions of judgment: how can we give value to an object when we lack confidence in our bannisters of judgment?⁵ What, in other words, accounts for our convictions if the disjunctive work of sensation denies us recourse to a belief, motivation, or norm that might justify our appraisals? These are central questions of modern aesthetics since the appearance of Kant’s third critique, and I also consider them as central to contemporary democratic theory: that is, a principal dilemma of any multicultural democratic society is to have to address how the pluralization of values within any one polity interrupts the ordered divisions that hold those polities together. Rather than developing normative arguments to resolve these questions, however, I turn to the writings on aesthetic reflection by a variety of contemporary and historical authors.

Many writers with diverse theoretical ambitions and orientations have struggled with some of the problems that I also grapple with in these pages. Given this, I should affirm at the outset that though I am indebted to, and have learned a great deal from, the work of psychoanalytic theorists who discuss the relationship between subjectivity, sensation, and appearances, I do not engage that tradition of critical thought in these pages.⁶ Rather I move away from the ambition to interpret the meaning of objects and events and explore the developments of some recent scholarship in cultural theory that challenge the hermeneutic assumption that things must be meaningful in order to count as valuable (as if meaning were a property of the object described). Importantly, such hermeneutic efforts do provide us with strategies for signification, but, to echo Brian Massumi’s critical inter-

ventions, “signifying gestures make sense,”⁷ and it is not so much the making of sense as the interruption of sense that I explore in this book.

To be more precise, in the chapters that follow I engage potential sites of the dislocation of subjectivity in popular culture and the occasions of reconfiguration that such dislocations invite. I take this to be important political work done on a quotidian basis by groups and individuals, and it is work that takes place beneath and beyond the discursive register of communicative sense making. The disarticulation of the subject is a theory of action that looks to acts of disfiguration and reconfiguration as ways of—as Hannah Arendt says—“breaking fresh ground and acting without precedents.”⁸ But before the breaking of ground, before the imaginative acts of reconfiguration, there is the dissensus of sensation that disrupts our confidence in the correspondence between perception and signification.

The aesthetic and political concerns that motivate my inquiries stem from what I take to be a notable fact of pluralist democratic societies: namely, that individuals or groups in these societies attend to one another at the level of appearances. One of the important contributions that cultural theory has made to contemporary explorations in political thought is to highlight the extent to which political life is fundamentally a perceptual enterprise.⁹ No less has this been the case with the critical insights of a variety of feminist theorists who examine the relationship between bodily experience, perception, and subjectivity.¹⁰ In the following pages, I exploit these contributions that address the theory-culture-politics nexus by bringing to bear upon the dynamics of multicultural politics various accounts of perception, especially as regards the complexity of visibility in political life.¹¹

If this might seem like an odd point of departure, consider how, at a crucial point in his study on the politics of recognition, Charles Taylor claims the following: “the demand for recognition [in political societies] is now explicit . . . [and] thanks to this idea, misrecognition has now graduated to the rank of a harm that can be hardheadedly enumerated.”¹² Echoing Frantz Fanon, he concludes that one of the chief political tools employed by those in power is the deployment of

images of peoples and cultures for the purpose of subjugation.¹³ The fascinating thing about this claim is neither its accuracy nor its verifiability but, more importantly, its adoption of a theory of visual perception that remains dangling and unexplored. What Taylor and other admirers and critics of multiculturalism alike rely on is an account of how images work—how they circulate, how they transmit their appearances as multisensory phenomena, and how individuals acquire those sensations—without ever making that account explicit. In short, the “harm that can be hardheadedly enumerated” of multicultural politics assumes a regime of perception that informs public judgments of recognition and equality. Multicultural politics, we are left to conclude, is a politics of visibility.

This account of visual culture relies on a figurative conception of the image.¹⁴ Taylor’s concern in these passages (and in his work on multiculturalism more generally) isn’t so much that individual or group images are valuable and ought to be respected; it is, rather, that their value is determined by their semantic content and that that meaning is available by pointing to a context.¹⁵ However, in this story of the subjugating power of the image, very little attention, if any, is paid to the role of sensation and the forms of political reflection that make these appearances visible, that allow for us to turn our attentions to them, and in doing so enable us to be captured and convinced by them; that is, little attention is paid to the regimes of perception that ensure the political valence of an image.

Jacques Rancière calls such regimes of perception “partitions of the sensible.”¹⁶ By “partitions of the sensible” he does not simply mean that an aesthetic attunement to the world of politics shows us that there are different perspectives or points of view that must be recognized. On the contrary, Rancière’s phrase suggests that our modes of perceiving the world, of sensing the presence of others, are parsed; that as subjects of perception, human beings are partial creatures variously divided. A partition of the sensible thus refers to perceptual forms of knowledge that parse what is and is not sensible, what counts as making (i.e., fabricating) sense and what is available to be sensed.¹⁷ “Politics,” Rancière thus concludes, “is an activity of reconfiguration of that which is given to the sensible.”¹⁸

These dynamics of the sensible suggest that our capacity to comprehend things is grounded in a particular organoleptic configuration that constitutes the self-evident dispositions of a sensing body: we always already know what it means to sense, what seeing, touching, and hearing are. Such assurances and the practices of sense making that enable them are, by definition, political. They relate our bodies to the world, but also determine the conditions through and by which we might sense the world and those who occupy it; in short, such regimes of perception confer what counts as common sense. But, we might ask, what if the relationship between our sensory organs and acts of perception is not as certain as we presume?

Consider the case of skin, the first threshold of touch. To touch, as Erin Manning has recently suggested, “is to conceive of a simultaneity that requires the courage to face the in-between.”¹⁹ There is no impermeable boundary that our skin might guarantee, and yet we insist on perceiving skin as a containment vessel. Gender, race, sex, desire, beauty, weight, and height are signifiers that correspond to the experience of skin as a determinate organ of perception. So it is that with skin we have a partition of the sensible that guarantees a series of other equivalences like recognition, impermeability, unity, and cohesiveness that are transcribed onto our political conceptions of individuality, identity, and subjectivity and work to overcome skin’s fluidity and porosity.

What would happen if our senses of skin were interrupted and we experienced skin as an organ of disfiguration? What if we went even further and stopped thinking organically so that the shape of our bodies was no longer determined by the disposition of our organs? Skin might stop being a determinate organ of perception and could become a nodule of sensation: my finger touches your arm and you can at once see, hear, and smell my touch. Therein lies sensation. For a brief moment, I alter my disposition toward you, and yours toward me. Now we have a new and temporary partition of the sensible whose durational intensity reconfigures our postures of perceptual attention without requiring that such a new configuration become either a precedent, rule, or expectation.²⁰

Some current research in the field of neuroaesthetics (a branch of neuroscience) also examines such assumptions about judgment, perception, and the forms of attention we give the world of appearances. A recent study in *Nature Neuroscience*, for instance, shows that our eyes are in constant motion, even when focusing on a single object. Every three seconds, our visual field shifts without our being aware of it: we have the impression of fixed perception but that sense of stability is in tension with our physical eye movements, or saccades. Thus we lose up to fifteen percent of perceived temporal experience because we cannot process the rapidity with which our eye movement registers the external world. In short, we all seem to suffer from a version of attention deficit as there exists a three-second interval between eye movement and the attention we give to objects in our field of vision. "As eye movement and attention are known to be tightly related," these researchers explain, "it is worthwhile to consider the possible role of attention in temporal compression. Attention is known to influence perceived duration and also temporal order."²¹ But this kind of eye movement also suggests an opposite effect, "a general dampening of attention at the time of saccades, a time when information is least reliable."²²

The dampening of attention and the subsequent unreliability of information that results from the relationship between eye movement, visuality, and registered perception does not describe a cognitive failure. It is, rather, an account of two distinct sequences of perceptual focus—the outline and the contour—that, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty explained some years ago, were also crucial to Paul Cézanne's explorations in painting.²³ The uniqueness of Cézanne's work for Merleau-Ponty is its ability to move beyond impressionism and depict objects "as they appear to instantaneous perception, without fixed contours bound together by light and air."²⁴ By developing a color technique that uses warm colors and blacks to depict the gradual formation of objects on a canvas, Cézanne breaks with impressionism and also breaks with the necessity of using outlines to draw shapes. "In giving up the outline," Merleau-Ponty explains, "Cézanne was abandoning himself to the chaos of sensations, which would upset the objects and constantly suggest illusions, as, for ex-

ample the illusion we have when we move our head that the objects themselves are moving—if our judgment did not constantly set the appearances straight."²⁵

Merleau-Ponty's distinction between judgment (straight appearances) and sensation (illusion and chaos) invoked to describe Cézanne's works relies on the distinction between an outline and a contour which rests on the even more basic distinction between a "primordial," or lived, perception and geometry.²⁶ Rather than painting a pure impression, Cézanne painted the experience of sensation, and the difference between the two efforts rests on the difference between painting objects by outlining shapes and using overlapping tones to create contours. "If one outlines the shape of an apple," Merleau-Ponty clarifies, "one makes an object of the shape, whereas the contour is rather the ideal limit towards which the sides of the apple recede in depth."²⁷ The recognition of an apple, in other words, requires accepting the outline's capacity to give shape to objects. In contrast, a contour does not depict an apple but allows for the apple's appearance to emerge through the blurring of overlapping color tones. "That is why Cézanne follows the swelling of the object in modulated colors and indicates several outlines in blue. Rebounding among these, one's glance captures a shape that emerges from them all, just as it does in perception."²⁸

To the extent that politics refers to the activity of rendering perceptible heterological elements, the insights that Merleau-Ponty offers regarding Cézanne's works help us appreciate how political life is comprised of the constant articulation and disarticulation of contours; and these kinds of activities are as informed by our aesthetic sensibilities as they are by our political ones. My inquiry into the political life of sensation thus stems from the following assumption: that the first political act is also an aesthetic one, a partitioning of sensation that divides the body and its organs of sense perception and assigns to them corresponding capacities for the making of sense. With sensation we enter a world of contours, resonances, vibrations, attunements, syntonizations, hapticities, and impulses, as Gilles Deleuze explains in his studies on painting.²⁹ Sensation is, as I suggested earlier, an interruption of sense; but it is important that we not

reduce sensation to an objective achievement. An acknowledgment of sensation is, at best, a modest accomplishment because the moment of sensation is an unexpected moment of dampened attention, when one loses recourse to the networks, practices, and relays of attachment that sustain representation.

To address these concerns, I proceed by means of what I call a genealogy of political reflection. I use the term "political reflection" to describe the thought-activity that accompanies the ethopoetic dimensions of sensation. My use of this term is indebted to Merleau-Ponty's claim that "reflection obscures what we thought was clear. We believe we know what feeling, seeing, and hearing were, and now these words raise problems,"³⁰ and further, that reflection "knows itself as reflection-on-an-unreflective-experience, and consequently as a change in structure of our existence."³¹ Reflection, as I understand it, is a modality of somacognition—of body thinking—that is oriented toward the indeterminacies that persist in political life. As the Italian architect Giovanni Garroni has recently written, "what is indeterminate in objects constitutes that ambiguous boundary that permits superimposition, allusion and even confusion. Instability is what subtracts objects from the solitude to which they would be condemned by a hypothetical absolute precision."³²

A genealogy of political reflection is attentive to the ways in which individuals relate to indeterminacy and ambiguity and through that relation constitute themselves as subjects of perception. This, for instance, is what I find especially captivating about the attention to taste that the practitioners of Slow Food endorse. As I discuss in chapter 5, the eating of a Narragansett turkey becomes, for the journalist Michael Pollan, an experience of convivium that rearticulates his perceptions of gratitude. The ability to perceive something is not, in this formulation, an accomplishment that marks a kind of unveiling or illumination; it refers, rather, to the ways in which the postures of attention we occupy—the bendings of the frames of our bodies, the turnings of our heads, the raisings of our eyes, the pricking of our ears, and the opening of our mouths—are acts of ethical reconfiguration; they are part of the work we do on ourselves that allows us to live in, and endure, the impact of appearances. The turning of one's

self is a relinquishing of our self that creates an ethical relationship with that from which we turn and with that toward which we turn; it is, in short, an ethical practice of *attending to* the world of appearances.

Thus, it is not at all obvious that at the moment of an appearance, of the emergence of a new political subjectivity, there will be conventions in place that will allow us to recognize the identity of the subject in question. Though we are affronted by a new appearance and face up to a political subjectivity's contour, at the moment of encounter recognition is an inadequate ethical response. The event of appearance is also an event of sensation and, as such, it is a disjunctive event that disarticulates the regimes of perception which allow us to establish the identity of an appearance. Rather than recognition, then, we have recourse to an act of admission: an appearance advenes upon us and we admit to it. But, as I explain in the epilogue to this book, such adveniences also invite reflection on an ethics of appearance, on those moments when we encounter and attend to an image but cannot fully account for it. Nor can we be sure that a discourse of accountability will help us in making sense of such an encounter because at the moment of impact, at the moment when an appearance advenes and we orient our postures of attention to it, we cannot confirm the outline or identity of the composition in question. The appearance of a new political subjectivity, like the appearance of an image, invites a relinquishing and a reconfiguring of our selves. Such reconfigurations, I submit, are ethical acts of part-taking in the political life of sensation.

On Narratocracy

In the following pages I bring to bear some recent reflections in aesthetics and cultural theory on the writings of selected historical and contemporary political thinkers. What I offer are not complete or comprehensive readings of any one thinker, theme, artifact, or event. Rather, I portray partial moments of engagement that help pose questions regarding the dynamics of aesthetics and politics. In this regard, a principal site of concern in the following pages is the

privileging of narrative as a genre for the exposition of claims and ideas in contemporary political thought, or what I call *narratocracy*.

Narratocracy is a prevailing regime of perception in the theoretical analysis of political phenomena. It offers the narrative line which is the story line that determines the trajectory of an action, but it is also the stenographic mark that traces a figure (of speech, of thought, of script, etc.) across a blank page; it is an outline that renders an object, event, practice, or person at once visible and available for accountability. This is what it means to delineate or give an account of something, and this "giving an account" orients the perceptibility of an appearance and our postures of attention to it. The story line thus incises itself onto a field of vision and begins the work of conviction. Narratocracy, or the rule of narrative, is the organization of a perceptual field according to the imperative of rendering things readable.

Narratocracy refers both to the governance of narrative as a standard for the expression of ideas and to the rules that parse the perceptual field according to what is and is not valuable action, speech, or thought. That an event may be rendered readable thus gives it a value and enables its mediatic circulation and access to the conditions that constitute its political legitimacy. Much can be said about this readerly repose of political thought, as Hannah Arendt does by first defining politics as a space of appearance and then committing those appearances to an Aristotelian *poiesis* of *muthos* (emplotment).³³ But by insisting on their narrative qualities, we condition appearances to the perceptual expectations of readability, situating them within a system of visibility and sayability that insists on their capacity to make sense. "Contraries," Michel de Certeau explains, "are therefore compatible within the same text under the condition that it is narrative. Temporalization creates the possibility of making coherent an order and its 'heteroclite', its irregularity."³⁴ In short, our ability to generate story lines determines our representational skills as well as our specific capacities for making sense of the heterology of political life.

Narratocracy commits vision to readerly sight while partitioning the body into specific areas of sensory competency. That is, our relation to "account giving" qua storytelling, and the narratocratic

postures of visual attention that accompany this, are enabled by "an organization of the visible"³⁵ that directs an individual's turn toward the world (and more specifically still, the world of politics). Narratocracy enlists forms of correspondence that designate both the nature of perception and what counts as a subject of perception. As an ethopoetic modality of knowledge committed to justifying the value of appearances, narratocracy thus constitutes us as a specific type of political subject: the literary individual.

Consider, in this regard, Judith Butler's account of the Rodney King video and the verdict in 1992 in the trial of the officers charged with using excessive force in his beating. Her concern stems from an act of perversion: namely, the defense council's successful presentation of the Rodney King beating by the Los Angeles police officers at the scene as a threat to those same officers. "How could this video," she asks in astonishment, "be used as evidence that the body being beaten was *itself* the source of danger?"³⁶ Her answer, quite rightly, is that the kind of viewing that the jurors were being asked to do took place within "a racially saturated field of visibility."³⁷ The rendering readable of the Rodney King beating to the jurors involved arranging the visual evidence within what Butler calls "a racist disposition of the visible"³⁸ that counted the black male body as a signifier for danger to the law.

Butler's reaction and response to the perceptual preconditions for the Rodney King verdict is to enlist "an aggressive counterreading" that reads "not only for the 'event' of violence, but for the racist schema that orchestrates and interprets the event, which splits the violent intention off from the body who wields it and attributes it to the body who receives it."³⁹ In other words, Butler's solution asks us to change the story line in order to render the Rodney King video differently readable, that is, readable in such a way that the phantasmagoric racial episteme at work during the trial is demystified.

It is hard to disagree with such a conclusion, but I think there is a parallel strategy, beyond the narratocratic one proposed by Butler, that may be pursued. We can recall, as Butler does, that the tactic of visual presentation adopted by the defense council was to slow down the video, break it into staccato sequences, and eliminate the sound-

track. The jurors didn't hear the sexual and racial obscenities shouted by the Los Angeles police officers but only saw punctuated scenes of potential violence. Within a legal system that requires certainty in order to convict, the defense council's objective was to transform the certainty of police violence into the certainty of Rodney King's threat (thus rendering the police violence uncertain): that strategy, in short, enacted a reconfiguration of the sensible that exploited an interruptive sequence of visual stills.

But what if rather than pursuing an aggressive counterreading that shifts the register of symbolic identification to unveil a racial visual field, we pointed out the dynamics of sensation that accompany the techniques of image production? What if the prosecutors in the Rodney King trial had made evident the techniques deployed by the defense council that transformed viewing into reading? That is, what if rather than remaining within the confines of a literary subjectivity where viewing *is* reading, a counterparsing took place that displayed not only the racialized viewing practices of the jurors but also the narratocratic technologies that rendered readable the defense council's reversal of violence?

Focusing on how the slowing down of the video and the elimination of the soundtrack transformed the viewing subject into a reading subject, for instance, might expose the fact that all viewing occurs within a regime of perception that parses what is and is not sensible.⁴⁰ Moreover, it could also reveal how the transformation of viewing into reading requires the deployment of specific epistemic technologies that guarantee the available correspondences between perception and meaning. Though an aggressive counterreading may be successful in rearticulating the symbolic structure of identification, the scene of production for that symbolic structure remains the same (i.e., a discursive and deliberative one) as do the conditions of its intelligibility (i.e., viewing as reading).⁴¹ By moving beyond the narratocratic impulse of providing counternarratives, we confront the ethical demands of visibility that reside in the production of the image, or the cropping of the frame, with the hope of disrupting the capture of a racialized conviction.⁴²

A modest amendment to Butler's invitation of an aggressive coun-

terreading, then, might turn to Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of reading in the *Philosophical Investigations*. "Try this experiment," he writes, "Say the numbers from 1 to 12. Now look at the dial of your watch and read them.—What was it that you called 'reading' in the latter case? That is, what did you do to make it into *reading*?"⁴³ Those familiar with Wittgenstein's writings will recognize how this passage reiterates the idea of perspicuity that structures his famous duck-rabbit example.⁴⁴ What is it about a sequence of stenographic marks, he asks, that renders them readable? Many answers may be given to this question, but one answer, recently proposed by Linda Zerilli, is particularly helpful. In *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, Zerilli explains that Wittgenstein's dawning of an aspect (in our example, the difference between saying numbers and reading a watch dial) presumes that ordinary seeing functions in such a way that "we normally understand without interpreting, and that is not a defect of some kind or failing on our part but the nonreflective basis of anything we might call critique."⁴⁵

The relevance of Zerilli's assertion is twofold: first, that any form of aspect dawning is premised on ordinary seeing, so that we always already exist within the confines of a regime of perception which is not necessarily an illusory or subjectifying mode of existence. Secondly, and more significantly, by drawing a distinction between saying numbers and reading the watch dial, Wittgenstein is asserting that there is nothing in the watch that compels a readerly engagement. To put it in Zerilli's own words, "the dawning of an aspect allows one to see that what one sees is not ascribable to anything in the object, but is rather based on the use of another concept."⁴⁶ To say this, in the end, is to insist that our perceptual activities are at once particular and percept driven, and that though we might ordinarily engage with objects in a narratocratic mode, there is nothing in the activity of critical political theorizing that requires individuals to have to accept or submit to narratocracy as the standard by which actions, events, and subjectivities are at once articulated and rendered meaningful.

Though I find Linda Zerilli's project in *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* compelling and persuasive,⁴⁷ I depart from her analysis at the

point when she asserts that “the possibility of interrupting and altering the system of representation in which we decide the question of true and false involves the faculty of presentation or figuration,”⁴⁸ that is, the imagination. For Zerilli, the imagination holds the place of Butler’s “aggressive counterreading” that, I want to suggest, is an activity of configuration subsequent to the event of interruption. To be sure, I don’t disagree with Zerilli that the imagination is a crucial political faculty; nor do I disagree with her claim, implicit in her discussion of aspect dawning, that the imagination might be helpful in enabling an internal feminist critical practice. I do however want to suggest that the possibility of interrupting systems of representation can occur without having to rely on the faculty of the imagination. Or, to put it slightly differently, in this book I argue that the experience of sensation disarticulates received forms of subjectivity and regimes of perception, and that the event of disarticulation precedes the productive role of figuration or presentation that Zerilli attributes to the imagination. I expand on this point, in somewhat different terms, in my discussion of Kantian immediacy in chapter 1. There I argue that Kant is committed to two moments of aesthetic experience: the first is the immediacy of aesthetic impact, and the second is the pronouncement of an aesthetic judgment, after the experience. I see the work of figuration as crucial to the second moment. Whereas in the first instance, when we are captured by a sensation, we do not require the determinative power of the faculty of the imagination to figure the newly thinkable. Indeed, in this moment it is disfiguration that is doing the work of interruption.

In chapter 1 I work out the aesthetic and political dimensions of sensation that will guide me throughout the rest of the book. This chapter, entitled “From *Nomos* to *Nomad*: Kant, Deleuze, and Rancière on Sensation,” is the most expository piece of writing in this book, and, as a result, it is least like the others. Whereas the subsequent chapters pivot around particular objects of aesthetic and political attention as sources for theoretical reflection (like a festival, a piazza, a movie, or a morsel of food), this chapter is exegetical in its attempt to offer a reinterpretation of Kantian disinterest informed by the aesthetic and political insights of Gilles Deleuze and Jacques

Rancière. In contrast to those who criticize Kant for his theory of the subject and also in contrast to those who endorse the political relevance of the third critique for its account of communicability, I argue that Kant’s aesthetic writings present a theory of the decentered subject and a political critique of privilege in aesthetic reflection. For Kant the “disinterested interest” of aesthetic judgment that arises from the immediate intensity of an aesthetic experience does not describe an impartial judicial stance but refers, rather, to a radical suspension of the subject from any ambition or desire of impartiality. This point, I argue further, forms the backdrop for the aesthetico-political orientation shared by Deleuze and Rancière and in the second half of this chapter, I address the debt that Deleuze and Rancière have to Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*.⁴⁹ Ultimately, what we have with the triangulation of Kant on immediacy, Deleuze on indistinction, and Rancière on dissensus is an exploration of sensation as a radical democratic moment in aesthetic judgment: rather than taste being inextricably bound to privilege, on Kant’s, Deleuze’s, and Rancière’s account there is no ground for privilege because there are no rules to determine the beautiful and hence, no reliable sources of authority to impose aesthetic standards.

In chapter 2, I expand on this point by shifting emphasis. If narratocracy is a problem for contemporary theory, then a source for this problem is historiographical accounts of political thinking that define political speech as the discovery and development of artifacts called concepts.⁵⁰ In “The Piazza, the Edicola, and the Noise of the Utterance,” I address these narratocratic biases and argue that those proponents of a history of rhetoric that treat the utterance as if its sole purpose is to present a cognitive claim overlook the sensoriality of claim making and, especially, the aurality of the utterance. In these pages I pursue a subjunctive history of democratic culture and introduce a theory of the utterance attentive to those aural qualities (like sonority and duration) that extend beyond its semantic and grammatical boundaries. Relying on the work of Michel de Certeau, Wassily Kandinsky, and Mikhail Bakhtin, I argue that an attunement to the aurality of democratic culture reconfigures our perceptual appreciation of what political claim making can sound like. In the

concluding sections I examine the role of the Italian piazza as a documentary source for the political life of sensation. An attention to such cultural objects composing the diurnal life of a demos like the piazza and the *edicola* (newsstand), I conclude, makes available a democratic form of nonsense that is not absent sense or meaninglessness, but rather refers to practices of articulation that stand outside of the shared lexicon of deliberation.

Much current historiography sets the narratocratic standards for theoretical argument. Through reading and writing, a concept transforms into the material stuff of theory. But such transformations rely on the presupposition of a communal sense that spans the centuries and establishes, beyond any doubt, the relationship between the expression of language, the advancement of a theoretical proposition, and a reader's posture of theoretical attention. The exploration of such presuppositions informs my analysis of Niccolò Machiavelli's writings. In the chapter entitled "Machiavelli's Theory of Sensation and Florence's *Vita Festiva*," I examine the history of public festivals in Renaissance Florence and consider how the explosion of the *vita festiva* (festival life) in the late quattrocento and early cinquecento might have contributed to Machiavelli's own understanding of the *vivere civile* (civic life). In so doing, I argue that in order to appreciate the political culture of the *vita festiva*, we must attend to the multiple plateaus of the political life of sensation crucial to this culture. As important as conceptual clarification may be to ideational artistry, there is another domain at work in Machiavelli's oeuvre that emphasizes the role of indistinction and brings with it an interruption of the regimes of perception and a reconfiguration of our forms of political reflection. This moment, I explain, begins with the impact of the "iter" of iteration and extends to the *riscontro* (clash, or encounter) of sensation.

At the core of my genealogical investigations is the claim that reading and writing are not simply exegetical enterprises but are, importantly, ethopoetic practices. Shifting from historical concerns to more contemporary ones, the subsequent chapter entitled "The Viewing Subject: Caravaggio, Bacon, and *The Ring*" is an engagement with recent studies in visual culture and their possible contribu-

tions to contemporary political thought. Here, I discuss a pictorial tradition developed by Caravaggio and expanded by the Irish painter Francis Bacon, both of whose visual efforts exploit the possibility of experiencing an aesthetic object without the imperative of rendering it readable. I pursue this insight in my discussion of the film *The Ring* which, I suggest, portrays practices of viewing so as to make specific claims on the viewer about the viewing experience. I argue further that the insistence of these aesthetic forms on the act of looking rather than on anything resembling a story puts pressure on political theory's own commitment to reading and writing as privileged forms of visual engagement. I conclude that though the citizen subject may have been a reading subject, the contemporary citizen subject is a viewing subject. Contemporary democratic theory, then, would be well served to engage the micropolitical strategies that restrict "viewing" to mere "seeing" and that limit circulation to only one posture of visibility.

The final chapter, entitled "You're Eating Too Fast! Slow Food's Ethos of *Convivium*," asks the following question: is there such a thing as a taste for politics? This chapter begins with an analysis of the mouth as a complex organ of political reflection and the role of flavor as an important thematic consideration in the history of political thought. Included in this genealogy of flavor are the writings of the nineteenth-century gourmand Pellegrino Artusi, whose recipes I discuss in order to set the stage for the ecogastronomic critical interventions of the Slow Food movement against culinary globalization. My interest is to explore Slow Food's ethos of convivium that, I argue, relies on a principle of transversality that is neither utilitarian, rationalist, nor communicative but is, rather, organoleptic: it endorses a *living with* the world that invites an appreciation of how the divergences and dissimilarities of tastes, textures, and flavors appear in the diurnal dimensions of sensory life.

In the concluding epilogue I reprise my considerations of an ethics of appearance in democratic politics (via a discussion of the Abu Ghraib photographs) and focus on a distinction that structures the entirety of this book. Namely, the difference between treating an aesthetic object as an instance of meaningful expression or as an

occasion for responsiveness (what I previously referred to as an *attending to the world*). In both instances there is an account of aesthetic experience as crucial to political reflection. At stake in this distinction, however, is the possibility of considering the advent of an appearance as a potential act of part-taking in the ethopoetic practices of the political life of sensation.

CHAPTER ONE

From *Nomos* to *Nomad*

Kant, Deleuze, and Rancière on Sensation

Thus although critics, as Hume says, are able to reason more plausibly than cooks, they must still share the same fate. For the determining ground of their judgment they are not able to look to the force of demonstrations, but only to the reflection of the subject upon his own state (of pleasure or displeasure), to the exclusion of precepts and rules. IMMANUEL KANT

One of the most challenging political and aesthetic demands posed by the work of Gilles Deleuze is “to have done with judgment.”¹ “If it is so disgusting to judge,” he affirms, “it is not because everything is of equal value, but on the contrary because what has value can be made or distinguished only by defying judgment.”² The difficulty with judgment, Deleuze unremittingly argues throughout his oeuvre, is not that it creates distinctions that disable the possibility of equality; the problem, rather, is that in order for something to have value, it must traverse the criteria of judgment that enable the appraisal of value. Value, as Kant also showed in his *Critique of Judgment*,

is an intensity that is not produced through judgment or by it but is, instead, that which exceeds any interest there might be in judging. Thus, in order to have value, we must do away with judgment.

To overcome judgment, Deleuze introduces the possibility of indistinction: a condition whereby those regimes of perception that structure one's appraisals are disarticulated and rendered indistinct from one another.³ Indistinction is Deleuze's way of characterizing an engagement with the world that overcomes the necessity of referentiality and the legislative urge that accompanies a referential model. Drawing sustenance from Melville's famous scrivener, Deleuze explains how *Bartleby's* formula is "devastating" precisely because it renders the preferable and nonpreferable indistinct;⁴ "I would prefer not to" is an antiformalist formula that challenges the insistence of pointing to one's preferences and having those preferences count as the referential coordinates that will constitute a life's trajectory.

In a critical and engaged response, Jacques Rancière addresses his distress regarding Deleuze's work, especially Deleuze's late writings on literature.⁵ That distress is, for him, epitomized by one of Deleuze's more unusual images: "a world 'in process, an archipelago', which is that of fraternal individuals: 'A wall of loose, uncemented stones, where every element has a value in itself but also in relation to others'."⁶ Rancière's apprehension is guided by what he considers an implicit quietism that accompanies the archipelago image. His ultimate concern is that the motility promised by indistinction is also an indifferentism since indistinction denies the possibility of judgment, and hence also its political potential of critique and disruption. For Rancière, Deleuze's loose surfaces force us to slide up against a brick wall of uncemented stones, no longer allowing us to stand against anything. Indistinction, he worries, comes dangerously close to indifferentism "and the question remains how can one make a difference in the political community with this indifference?"⁷

In this chapter I undertake an exposition of, and engagement with, a Deleuzian disgust with judgment. I do so by bringing Deleuze and Rancière into conversation with one another and by showing the proximity of these thinkers' theoretical articulations. To do this, I establish the Kantian origins of their respective positions on judg-

ment. Specifically, I am interested in how Deleuze's treatment of indistinction and Rancière's treatment of dissensus and the interruption of the partitions of the sensible are indebted to Immanuel Kant's exposition of the durational intensity of immediacy in aesthetic experience and the disinterested interest that arises in an aesthetic encounter.⁸ This triangulation of theoretical positions—that is, Kant on immediacy, Deleuze on indistinction, Rancière on dissensus—configures the theoretical trajectory of my own explorations of the political life of sensation throughout this work.

My motivation for this triangulation is equally threefold. The first is theoretical: I argue that the experience of sensation does not rely on a preconstituted composition of individual subjectivity or consciousness. My treatment of Kant, Deleuze, and Rancière will show how these thinkers share an insight about the nature of perception and the composition of common sense. Furthermore, I will show how Deleuze and Rancière, indebted to a Kantian insight about the nature of aesthetic experience, extend that insight and transform it into a critical project that takes issue with the possibility of a perceptual common ground for the distribution of sense.

The second point is an ethical one: the compulsion to legislate judgment and provide a common source of norms for appraisal coincides with an instrumentalist urge to dictate the conditions of possibility for value that are subsequently deployed to direct political action. This second observation regards the relationship between freedom and the experience of value, and my development of it is indebted to Immanuel Kant's claim that in aesthetic experience there can be no rules to legislate a judgment of the beautiful. Though Kant's account of immediacy and disinterest is not original in that it can be situated within a more general, eighteenth-century fascination with the moment of aesthetic impact,⁹ what is original is his commitment to resisting any deontological account of the beautiful. Kant believes that our aesthetic judgments cannot be indebted to an authoritative knowledge, nor can they be commanded by it. Rather, an experience of the beautiful is such that it ungrounds our subjectivity and compels a form of reflection that cannot rely on an inherited structure or a preorganization of values.¹⁰

Finally, my third motivation is an aesthetico-political one: my argu-

ment throughout this book is that within any one regime of perception there exists a micropolitics of appraisal that formulates the shared conditions for sense making. These micropolitical strategies create dynamics of conviction that generate affinities of sensibility between and among individuals and groups. More than what has wittingly or unwittingly been endorsed as a "clash of civilizations,"¹¹ contemporary democratic life is characterized by varying and diverse political cultures of conviction, each of which carries its own regimes of perception that govern what does and does not count as an experience, motivation, or intuition. These regimes of perception constitute a common world of the sensible which, at one and the same time, distributes legitimacy and endorses the convictions that bring that sense world into being. Kant, Deleuze, and Rancière, I argue, are thinkers attuned to the dynamics of interruption and reconfiguration of sense making that the experiences of sensation afford.

Kantian Immediacy

"Those Ideas which are rais'd in the Mind upon the presence of external Objects, and their acting upon our Bodys, are call'd Sensations," asserts Francis Hutcheson. "We find that the Mind in such Cases is passive, and has not Power directly to prevent the Perception or Idea, or to vary it at its Reception, as long as we continue our Bodys in a state fit to be acted upon by the external Object."¹² Hutcheson's definition of sensation insists not so much on the separation of mind and body as on the relative independence of perception from the rational faculties. The passivity of the mind, for Hutcheson, refers to the inertness of the intellectual faculties in determining the event of sensation. As Paul Guyer explains, "Hutcheson does not just argue that the sense of beauty is natural and immediate, but he also excludes from its operation precisely the kind of manifestation of the faculty of reason which is ultimately central to Shaftesbury's Neoplatonism."¹³ For Guyer, Hutcheson represents a break with the Neoplatonic commitment to integrating sensorial receptivity with intellectual comprehension that the Earl of Shaftesbury had defended so strongly in his 1711 publication, *Characteristics of*

Men, Manners, Opinions, Times. A subsequent inheritor of Hutcheson's intervention is Immanuel Kant, Guyer explains further, whose treatment of the disinterested interest in the judgment of beauty pays tribute to some of Hutcheson's key insights into the nature and origin of sensation.

Implicit in Hutcheson's argument regarding the radical separation of sensation and the intellect is the assertion that that which is consequent to sensorial perception—esthetic experience—cannot lay a claim to use or advantage (this includes the use or advantage of an aristocratic posture of esthetic detachment endorsed by the Earl of Shaftesbury).¹⁴ Since the rational faculties determine the use value of an object and since those faculties are, in principle, inconsequential to esthetic experience, it follows that the possibility of identifying use value through esthetic experience is equally unavailable. It is this insight that forms the backdrop to Kant's own reflections on the disinterested interest in esthetic judgment, as he explains in the first part, section 5 of the *Critique of Judgment*: "Of all these three kinds of delight [i.e., pleasant, beautiful, and good], that of taste in the beautiful may be said to be the one and only disinterested and free delight; for, with it, no interest, whether of sense or reason, extorts approval."¹⁵

For Kant, there is an important resonance between freedom and disinterest that has nothing to do with a Neoplatonic idealism. Kant's claim is not one that attempts to decontextualize esthetic experience by insisting on its disinterested nature: that is, Kant's "disinterest" should not be read in the same light or with the same critical purchase as "impartial."¹⁶ It is, instead, exactly the opposite. The disinterested interest in esthetic experience, which at the end of part 1, section 5 becomes the basis for Kant's definition of a judgment of the beautiful, is the result of a radical suspension of the subject of perception from the conditions that would make the desire for impartiality and ambition worth pursuing. For Kant, the beautiful is a kind of hybrid experience that is neither purely rational (like the good) nor purely sensorial (like the gratification of the pleasant), but is at once both and neither. Beauty belongs to reason to the extent that it concerns human beings, and human beings are rational crea-

tures to the extent that they possess the mental capacity to generate representations; beauty is irrational to the extent that it appeals to our sensory perceptions; but it is neither to the extent that neither reason nor sense dictate the terms of our acknowledgment of beauty. In this regard, neither reason nor sense legislates the possibility of our experience of the beautiful, and thus neither reason nor sense "extorts our approval." Rather than the disinterested subject being a version of the impartial observer, what Kant offers his readers is a subject whose interest at the moment of sensory experience is disarticulated, as are his or her conditions of subjectivity.

The feeling of freedom that arises from aesthetic experience occurs because there is no governing principle in the beautiful that commands a submission to its mode of attention. The disinterested interest in the beautiful is thus a claim about the impossibility of generating a relationship of want between an object and the subject of perception. This lack of interest further extends Hutcheson's original claim that use value is irrelevant to aesthetic experience. For Kant, like Hutcheson, the possibility of establishing the use value of an object requires the further possibility of generating conditions for assigning comparative value to that object vis-à-vis other objects within a series. Thus, we have a relationship of use when we can assess the value of an object in relation to other either similar or dissimilar objects. But in the case of aesthetic judgment, no such relationship can exist. The question remains why.

To answer this question, we must revert to the preceding section of the third critique, section 4 of the first part. This section sets out to explain that the desire for the good carries an interest as does the desire for the pleasant. Because the good belongs to the legislative faculty of reason, Kant explains, and its prescription depends on knowing the nature of that good thing, one must be able to give reasons for the goodness of something as well as to conceive or represent it. Kant's basic point is that a concept of the good needs to be in place in order to direct our actions, and our justifications of the normative conditions that compel us to sign on to a particular conception of the good determine our interest in it. To use a thoroughly conventional Kantian example, we have an interest in not lying be-

cause we would not want to be lied to. But the beautiful, Kant emphasizes repeatedly, is exempt from this dynamic of a necessary relation between object and subjective interest.

To stress the point, there is a difference here that marks the nature of the disinterested interest in the beautiful: that difference, I want to argue, is a durational one. By the end of the subsequent paragraph, after instructing his readers on the distinction between the pleasant and the good, Kant makes the following passing remark:

But that the reference to delight is wholly different where what gratifies is at the same time called good, is evident from the fact that with the good the question always is whether it is mediately or immediately good, i.e., useful or good in itself; whereas with the agreeable this point can never arise, since the word always means what pleases immediately—and it is just the same with what I call beautiful.¹⁷

Kant never expands fully on this last clause, nor does he explain why the word "agreeable" always signifies immediacy. We are left to deduce, therefore, that the immediacy of which Kant speaks must have something to do with the manner in which an external object impacts upon our senses and the reverberations generated subsequent to that immediate impact. The beautiful shares with the pleasant the condition of sensation, and thus also shares the durational intensity of immediacy. Immediacy in aesthetic experience, I submit, interrupts the capture of interest and makes it so that there can be a disinterested interest in the beautiful.

This can occur for two reasons: first, under the pressures of immediacy we lose access to the kinds of conditions that make it possible to determine things like motivation, use, or belief—all forces that constitute the nature of interest. Second, in such a temporal condition we lack the necessary cognitive connections to generate comparisons. When we encounter an aesthetic object, Kant believes, that object has an immediate impact on our senses, thus generating sensations. The immediacy of that impact is a durational intensity that interrupts the circuitry of interactivity to which we are accustomed. That is, with the immediacy of sensory perception, we cannot rely on any structure that would relate that object to other sources of

value because at that moment our capacity to create lines of connection (like analogy or comparison) is interrupted. In short, we lack the opportunity of generating a regime of value necessary to establish a context of interest that would relate an object to other objects. It follows from this that when an aesthetic object captures us, the encounter with that object disarticulates the purchase of belief we deem necessary for conviction. Here, conviction occurs through the durational intensity of sensation, and not from an *a priori* interest; from a Kantian perspective, the capture of conviction cannot result from an antecedent methodological or interpretive commitment or belief.

To claim an interest we must also be able to connect an object with a set of other objects and subsume that object under a general category that organizes its comparative value. This, in effect, is the basis of any utilitarian value scheme to the extent that, by creating a representational device for collecting members of a group in a common activity (like a dean's honor list, for instance), one is able to generate an appraisal of their relative standing *vis-à-vis* other members of the same group (i.e., the student's ranking).¹⁸ The immediacy of aesthetic experience, however, interrupts this operation, ushering us into a state of judicial convalescence; all of a sudden, we cannot determine the category to which that object belongs nor are we equipped to determine its place in any serial disposition of other objects. Thus, there is a "disinterested interest" in a judgment of the beautiful because we have a natural disposition to aesthetic experiences (to the extent that we are creatures of sensation, and thus equipped to react to an object); but when we do encounter an aesthetic object, we at once lose the capacity to relate that object to any conventional or customary regime of value. The durational intensity of immediacy in aesthetic experience interrupts the posture of attention that has interest as its guiding objective; or, to put this in terms that will become more familiar to the reader as we proceed, immediacy disrupts an interest-oriented regime of appraisal, and with it, it disfigures the organoleptic conditions for signification. In short, aesthetic experience ungrounds our subjectivity.

When Kant famously defines taste as "the faculty of estimating an

object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest,"¹⁹ he is referring to the moment of immediacy that denies any antecedent conceptualization of the beautiful object. Kantian aesthetic judgment thus attends to a disjunctive moment when we are unable to make the kinds of distinctions necessary to establish an interest in an object, including any antecedent relation like tradition, context, or function. Indeed, Kant's commitment to disinterest goes so far as to assert that we must be indifferent to the existence of the object,²⁰ and though Kant readily admits that we exist within a substratum of sensorial affinities that organize our world according to determinable partitions of perception, and that such partitions themselves are organized according to norms and practices of sense making, aesthetic experience is such that it interrupts those networks of relation by creating a temporal and temporary state of indistinction.

It's worth pointing out that there is nothing in Kant's claims about immediacy that make it synonymous with quickness or speed. Immediacy is a durational intensity that refers to the moment of impact as well as to the protracted state of attention of the subject engaged with a beautiful object, what Kant will refer to as our tendency to "dwell [or linger] on the contemplation of the beautiful."²¹ In this regard, we can assume that part of what constitutes the pleasure of aesthetic experience for Kant results from the condition of capture and conviction that comes from the immediacy of an aesthetic encounter. And the reason why we might conclude this is that, given its temporal nature, the possibility of such encounters are unprescribable, and hence impossible to legislate.²² In other words, the pleasure in the beautiful (that stems from the immediacy of a disinterested interest) is the result of the sensation of freedom subsequent to an encounter with an object without the burden of having to attend to a conceptual framework that defines or justifies the nature of one's conviction. There is a pleasure for Kant in not being bound by concepts, as he clearly states: "To deem something good, I must always know what sort of a thing the object is intended to be, i.e., I must have a concept of it. That is not necessary to enable me to see beauty in a thing."²³

The formidableness of this assertion is made manifest in what I will refer to throughout this book as Kant's radical democratic project in the *Critique of Judgment*. I have partly hinted at this by including an epigraph that aligns critics and cooks, a passage that places their judgments of taste on an equal footing. But though Kant was clearly amused by this passage in Hume's essays—or at least amused enough to treat it at length—he also takes this principle very seriously. When Kant speaks of a “principle of taste,” he refers to the possibility of subsuming the value of an object under a general rubric that will guide the acceptance of its beauty. To do so, however, would immediately disqualify the object's claim to beauty. “Thus,” he concludes, “there can be no rule to which anyone is to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful.”²⁴ I will return to this assertion in my discussion of the transversal properties of an ethos of convivium in chapter 5. For now, I want to connect this claim both to the temporality of immediacy and to the notion of a disinterested interest.

Kant repeats versions of this claim throughout the third critique. Most notably, he introduces the language of the a priori in section 12 of the first part to assert the impossibility of determining a priori grounds for legitimating the feeling of either pleasure or pain. Once again, as in the case of immediacy, the justification is temporal: one cannot know a priori whether something will be pleasant or painful because pleasure and pain are consequent to experience, and hence are a posteriori phenomena. More precisely, there can be no interest in the existence of the beautiful object because there also cannot be any possibility of determining a concept for it. That is, the disinterested interest in the beautiful trumps any and all motivation for legislating an object's worth. Moreover, and as already indicated, the immediacy of the moment of aesthetic impact will also deny the possibility of a rule governing the beautiful for if immediacy interrupts our regimes of perception to the point of discomposing our way of attending to the world, we must conclude that that immediacy will also disrupt our relationship to rule and rule following.²⁵ Just as we cannot establish an interest in a beautiful object that will continue through time and regardless of the spectator, so it will be impossible to establish a rule for the preservation and prescription of

beauty. To put the matter slightly differently, immediacy and disinterest make it impossible to determine rules for aesthetic reflection.²⁶

This antinormative thread that runs throughout the third critique is what I take to be Kant's radical democratic project of aesthetic judgment. His description of the feeling of freedom that comes with a relief from the burdens of normativity is indicative of this, but so is his collapsing of the rank status between the cook and the critic. As I argue, the account of aesthetic experience that is grounded in the durational intensity of immediacy and a disinterested interest in the existence of the object works to coordinate the conditions that make possible this radically egalitarian position. For Kant, anyone can experience beauty precisely because no one can determine its conditions of existence. This is the egalitarian promise of Kantian aesthetics: both the cook and the critic are afforded the occasion for aesthetic experience and neither the cook nor the critic has the privilege of safeguarding the conditions for that experience. Taste is available, for Kant, regardless of privilege.

That there “can be no rule to which anyone is to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful” is Kant's most endearing performative contradiction, but it is also Kant's most impressive expression of the relationship between freedom, equality, and aesthetic judgment. It is, I would argue further, a moment in the political life of sensation when the regimes of appraisal with which we customarily organize the world are taken from us, compelling us to have to reconfigure our own postures of attention. Through aesthetic judgment, then, we are subject to the whim of a moment that is unlike any other moment; and the consequence of this indeterminate technique of subjectification is the disarticulation of the conventions by which we attend to the world.

Deleuze's Disgust with Judgment Examined

What seems profoundly perplexing about Deleuze's disgust with judgment is the extent to which his aversion is indebted to Kantian judgment despite his resistance to it.²⁷ As we have just seen, immediacy and disinterest work in such a way as to create precisely the

conditions of indistinction that are, for Deleuze, at once aesthetically and ethically crucial for the kind of descendent ethics of sensation he develops. Before I describe the nature of that ethical project, I want to outline what is at stake in Deleuze's appeal "to have done with judgment."²⁸

We get a sense of those stakes when Deleuze claims that the doctrine of judgment, elaborated from Greek tragedy to modern philosophy, is characterized by the institution of the tribunal. "Kant," he goes on to say, "did not invent a true critique of judgment; on the contrary, what the book of this title established was a fantastic subjective tribunal." The tribunal, he then expands, is "that infinite point at which accusation, deliberation, and verdict converge."²⁹ Judgment for Deleuze is inseparable from a Kafkian image of a trial where the pronouncements of a judge are dangerous liaisons that direct the referent to the referee and the arbiter to the *arbitrium*. The "fantastic subjective tribunal" that Kant establishes refers to a kind of submission the individual goes through in the process of reflection, not unlike the Christian examination of conscience in confession;³⁰ and it is this process of submission that Deleuze finds most disgusting. Indeed, by insisting on disgust as the manner by which we might engage the doctrine of judgment qua model of tribunal, Deleuze is in fact deploying a principle he will sustain throughout his aesthetic and ethical writings: "The doctrine of judgment has reversed and replaced the system of affects,"³¹ and his project will be to invert that reversal.

To do so, Deleuze explores the possibility of an ontology of sensation.³² By this, I mean that Deleuze's critique of the doctrine of judgment insists on the nondeterminable, affective dimensions of human life. In this respect, Rancière is absolutely correct when he describes Deleuze's project as substituting "one ground for another, an empiricist English ground for a German idealist ground."³³ The "empiricist English ground" is the system of affects that Deleuze derives from his studies of David Hume and that he wants put in the place of the "German idealist ground" of the Kantian tribunal.³⁴ But there is something more to Deleuze's admonitions against judgment than this significant reversal; Deleuze's commitment to an ontology

of sensation is rooted in an attempt to grapple with the relationship between thinking and sensation without having to revert to a synthesis of mind and body which, for him, is implied by, and constitutive of, the judgment model. Thus, the basis of Deleuze's refusal of Kantian judgment rests on a belief that the work done to provide a real theory of imaginative freedom is ultimately curtailed by the Königsbergian's desire to synthesize the cognitive and the experiential; that is, by his profound need to make freedom palpable. It is, ultimately, this process of synthesis—and the subsumptive operation that enables it—which allows Deleuze to equate Kantian judgment with the image of the tribunal.

Deleuze's critique of the model of judgment thus has two parts: (1) judgment involves the operation of subsumption of the particular to the general which implies the legislative authority of the general in organizing the distribution of particulars, and (2) in order for this operation to occur, there must be presuppositions in place that constitute a sensible regime of the common that establishes the channels for the distribution of things, the reception of those things by specific subjects, and the ends to which those things ought to be disposed.³⁵ In other words, the model of judgment can never escape the forces of legislation and distribution, and subsumption is the cognitive operation that enables the fluid working of these forces. Thus, Deleuze concludes, "judgment has precisely two essential functions, and only two: distribution, which it ensures by the *partition* of concepts; and hierarchization, which it ensures by the *measuring* of subjects. To the former corresponds the faculty of judgment known as common sense, to the latter the faculty known as good sense (or first sense). Both constitute just measure or 'justice' as a value of judgment."³⁶

The "fantastic subjective tribunal" of Kant's third critique is Deleuze's judgment of Kant and refers to Kant's failure in establishing what he sets out to do: namely, to create conditions of judgment that do not rely on a normative regime of interest. This objection might be easily dismissed given my exposition of Kantian immediacy in the preceding pages, and though Deleuze might sign on to my initial analysis, Kant's failure, he might retort, is not in his account of aesthetic experience per se but with his account of the consequences

of this moment within the larger framework of his critical philosophy. Kant's failure, in other words, stems from the kind of universality that he reserves for the judgment of the beautiful. For Kant, when we say that something is beautiful, we assume that it is valid for everyone even though we cannot legislate it to be so. This is the principle of universality that forms the basis of his discussion of the *sensus communis*. This expectation of communicability, Deleuze wants to say, is what reestablishes the tribunal regime of appraisal that is the model of judgment. Here is one of Kant's formulations of the *sensus communis*:

However, by the name *sensus communis* is to be understood the idea of a public sense, i.e., a critical faculty which in its reflective act takes account (a priori) of the mode of representation of everyone else, in order, as it were, to weigh its judgment with the collective reason of mankind, and thereby avoid the illusion arising from subjective and personal conditions which could readily be taken for objective, an illusion that would exert a prejudicial influence upon its judgment. This is accomplished by weighing the judgment, not so much with actual, as rather with the merely possible, judgments of others, and by putting ourselves in the position of everyone else, as the result of a mere abstraction from the limitations which contingently affect our own estimate. This, in turn, is effected by so far as possible letting go the element of matter, i.e., sensation, in our general state of representative activity, and confining attention to the formal peculiarities of our representation or general state of representative activity.³⁷

Much has been said about this famous passage, and I will refrain from further commenting on it other than to point out that when Kant speaks of the communicability of a judgment of taste, he is no longer talking about the immediacy of aesthetic experience. On the contrary, the discussion of *sensus communis* answers the question of how to circulate and transmit one's experiences so as to avoid the potential of coercion; that is, the emergence of a public sense refers to what occurs subsequent to aesthetic experience. In this regard, everything about this passage returns us to a utilitarian framework: Kant's fear that one's subjective judgment could transform itself into a coer-

cive and authoritarian injunction (i.e., "a prejudicial influence") is so strong that the intersubjectivity implicit in the idea of a "collective reason of mankind" becomes the instrumental objective of aesthetic experience. Moreover, once Kant establishes the condition of universality that "is effected by so far as possible letting go the element of matter, i.e., sensation, in our general state of representative activity," he also establishes the conditions for analogy that, in the second part of the third critique, ground his claim that "the Beautiful is the symbol of the morally Good, and that it is only in this respect (a reference which is natural to every man and which every man postulates in others as a duty) that it gives pleasure with a claim for the agreement of everyone else."³⁸

The mistake that Kant makes, in Deleuze's view, is that though he is willing to allow the possibility of an experience that does not require the conditions of legislation to enable it, he ultimately does not allow that experience to disarticulate the system of hierarchy that would determine it. Rather than giving us a theory of the freedom of the imagination from the determination of concepts, Deleuze concludes that Kant's final critique "uncovers a deeper free and indeterminate accord of the faculties as the condition of the possibility of every determinate relationship."³⁹ That the beautiful is a symbol of the morally good means, for Deleuze, that the morally good has instrumental priority over the effects of the beautiful. In other words, though we enter into a condition of indistinction in aesthetic experience, that condition does not interrupt the hierarchy of the system of value that forms the basis of a Kantian critical philosophy. Once Kant invents a symbolic relation between the moral and the aesthetic, he establishes a rank order of value that ultimately privileges and immunizes the moral domain. Thus, whereas from one perspective Kant's synthesis of the moral and the beautiful (that completes his synthesis of the transcendental and the empirical) may appear as a commitment to the idea that our sense of beauty is complicit with a myriad of other sources of human value,⁴⁰ from Deleuze's perspective the symbolic relation between the moral and the aesthetic is both the first and last phase of a tribunal that establishes the privilege of the moral in a doctrine of the faculties.

What is more, an analogical relation such as the one established through a symbolic accord between the moral and the aesthetic returns us to the problem of distribution because it endorses a system of identity; analogy is, for Deleuze, "the essence of judgment"⁴¹ to the extent that it determines a system of distributive value relations where "existence is cut into lots, the affects are distributed into lots, and then related to higher forms."⁴² When Deleuze thus concludes, in *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, that "the last Critique uncovers a deeper free and indeterminate accord of the faculties as the condition of the possibility of every determinate relationship," he is in fact condemning Kant for having succumbed to the determinative power of analogy, and for having reinstituted a regime of appraisal that curtails sensation from doing the work of disfiguration that Kant himself had promised in his account of aesthetic experience. By introducing analogy as a relevant category in his analysis, Kant simultaneously reintroduces the determinative powers of subsumption and subordination as apodictic principles for the organization of experience.

For Deleuze, analogy is a privileged form of judgment that is synonymous with subordination; through analogy we make things similar, and thus subsume the particularity of an experience to a general rule or category. Through the determinative power of analogy one is compelled to have to measure up to preestablished conditions of representation. Judgment is thus a rigid designator for subordination, and even the greatest attempt to escape this dynamic, Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, was ultimately unsuccessful.

Deleuze's Reply: A Descendental Ethics

Where Kant retains a principle of hierarchy that determines the primacy of moral reasoning through the subordination of the beautiful to the moral, Deleuze proposes a *descendental* ethics that engages the aesthetico-political dynamics of subsumption and subordination at the *infracial* level of experience. To be subordinate means to belong to an order below or beneath someone or something; "to subsume" is the verb that accounts for the dynamic of subordination. Subsumption and subordination operate in such a way as to create strata under which the intensities of sensation are assigned. In this

respect, there is an infracial plateau generated at every moment of judgment. If judgment corresponds to subsumption, then each instant of judgment figures a surface under which an intensity is fixed; the line that draws this boundary traces a stratum which is the infracial plateau. Deleuze's descendental ethics engages and interrupts the line's capacity to figure such infracial surfaces and in doing so attempts to expose the intensity of sensation.

Consider, in this regard, Deleuze's discussion with Félix Guattari of the line's relationship to writing:

In effect, the line is all the more abstract when writing is absent, either because it has yet to develop or only exists outside or alongside. When writing takes charge of abstraction, as it does in empires, the line, already downgraded, necessarily tends to become concrete, even figurative. Children forget how to draw. But in the absence of writing, or when peoples have no need for a writing system of their own because theirs is borrowed from more or less nearby empires (as was the case for the nomads), the line is necessarily abstract; it is necessarily invested with all the power of abstraction, which finds no other outlet.⁴³

Writing is characteristic of empires, in Deleuze's and Guattari's often difficult account of these entities because writing is an activity for the figurative display of comparative value: a word's meaning is constituted by its position within a context of possible significations, including the context of a sentence—that is, the organizational structure of the sentence is such that it puts pressure onto individual words to perform their role.⁴⁴ The written line is not abstract because writing always has a context; thus, as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry famously recounted, once taught the adult skill of writing, children forget how to draw.⁴⁵ Writing is here understood as a technique of figuration that gives shape to things and halts the movement and migration of words. Reminiscent of the distinction between an outline and a contour invoked by Merleau-Ponty in his discussion of Cézanne's apples (see the prologue), the aesthetic distinction between abstraction and figuration marks the possibility of thinking ethics in terms other than nomological ones.

It is important to note that for Deleuze and Guattari the oscillations between abstraction and figuration are not specific to any par-

ticular historical period but rather are characteristic of a nomological turn that accompanies the desire to subordinate the line to the figure. As Daniel Smith explains, "the danger of figuration or representation is that it is both illustrative and narrative: it relates the image to an object that it supposedly illustrates, thereby subordinating the eye to the model of recognition and losing the immediacy of the sensation."⁴⁶ This, I would add, is also the danger of nomology, and it is this dynamic—that is, the passage from the abstract to the figurative that subordinates sensations to the nomological imperative of "making sense"—that is the central concern of a Deleuzian descendental ethics of indistinction. "The figurative, or imitation or representation," Deleuze and Guattari continue,

is a consequence, a result of certain characteristics of the line when it assumes a given form. We must therefore define those characteristics first. Take a system in which transversals are subordinated to diagonals, diagonals to horizontals and verticals, horizontals and verticals to points (even when there [*sic*] are virtual). A system of this kind, which is rectilinear or unilinear regardless of the number of lines, expresses the formal conditions under which a space is striated and the line describes a contour. Such a line is inherently, formally, representative in itself, even if it does not represent anything. On the other hand, *a line that delimits nothing, that describes no contour*, that no longer goes from one point to another but instead passes between points, that is always declining from the horizontal and the vertical and deviating from the diagonal, that is constantly changing direction, a mutant line of this kind that is without outside or inside, form or background, beginning or end and that is alive as a continuous variation—such a line is truly an abstract line, and describes a smooth space. It is not inexpressive. Yet is true [*sic*] that it does not constitute a stable and symmetrical *form of expression* grounded in a resonance of points and a conjunction of lines. It is nevertheless accompanied by *material traits of expression*, the effects of which multiply step by step.⁴⁷

The system of subordinations that creates a hierarchy ranging from the transversal line to points is characteristic of the nomological which has as its guiding principles the representative power of figuration and narration.⁴⁸ The purpose of that system is to establish a

regime of perception where the line is exclusively representative, describing a contour rather than allowing the contour to resonate as Merleau-Ponty had said it might. In short, nomology's power is to represent through figuration or narration. In contrast, the abstract line has the intensity of Bartleby's "I would prefer not to;" it declines narration, figuration, and the need to describe referentiality. Such a line is not inexpressive but is, rather, a sensation "accompanied by material traits of expression." These material traits of expression are the systems of affects that resonate along the infrafacial plateau of indistinct sensation.

The aesthetico-political claims about abstraction and figuration vis-à-vis the nature of a line are emblematic of an entire thematic running throughout Deleuze's oeuvre: that is, the movement from *nomos* to *nomad* involves a descent into the infrafacial domain of sensation. Subsumption, subordination, and the like are intensities of figuration that gain purchase once the system of representations and subordination is put into place. But at their generative stages, before they emerge and acquire a nomology about them, these intensities persist on a plane beneath the surface, and at this infrafacial plateau, there is nothing about them that guarantees their nomological purchase. This, ultimately, is the moment of indistinction that Deleuze's entire oeuvre wants to keep alive.

Indistinction thus refers to an inability of figuring, of giving an account that is something other than an acknowledgment of sensation. In this regard, indistinction also refers to the transversalism of a descendental ethics that aspires to the state of judicial convalescence Kant described in his account of aesthetic experience, that is, when our postures of attention are disfigured to the point of no longer being subject to the perceptual conditions determined by a regime of perception. At that moment the dynamics of conviction that capture our attention are disarticulated and our comfortable repose of figuration is, in a word, disfigured. The political shift from *nomos* to *nomad* has an accompanying aesthetic shift from sense to sensation (i.e., from figuration to disfiguration), and it is the engagement with the dynamics of this shift that best characterizes Deleuze's descendental ethics.

This moment, I argue, is cognate with Kant's moment of imme-

diacy. Just as Kant believes that there can be no rules for judging beauty because there is no determining ground at the moment of aesthetic encounter, so does Deleuze believe that the moment of indistinction is immediate and precedes the generic and qualitative (one might even say "figural") account of difference. The indistinction of sensation is Deleuze's corollary to a Kantian disinterested interest: in both cases, immediacy works to create a condition of dissensual delight where we can no longer be confident of any determinate relation between perception and organoleptic experience. Indeed, Deleuze takes it one step further to the extent that he imagines each moment of experience as a potential moment of disfiguration, which helps explain his fascination with the Irish painter, Francis Bacon. Bacon, as we shall see in chapter 4, is the painter of disfiguration who refused the narratological necessity of justifying the scream; he is, to put it in more linear terms, someone who explored the line's potential beyond (or beneath) its figural qualities. This aesthetic resistance to figuration is, finally, what structures Deleuze's descendent ethics.

Jacques Rancière's Dissensus

Deleuze's indistinction presents an argument about equality: "The world of representation," he asserts, "presupposes a certain type of sedentary distribution, which divides or shares out that which is distributed in order to give 'each' their fixed shares."⁴⁹ The problem with such systems of distribution (and with representation more generally) is that they can never adequately account for those heterological elements whose particularity does not fit. The apportioning of parts relies on an arrangement whose organizational structure must remain intact in order for the operation of partitioning to take place. Indistinction is the aesthetico-political intervention into that world of common parts and common distribution channels. If, that is, the channels of distribution of equality become indistinct (including our networks of perception), then we have no way of assigning a privileged participation to any one experience or criterion of experience.

If there is anything that Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Rancière share, it is this distrust of the criteria of distribution that rely on predetermined lines of communication, of "counting" as Rancière might say. "A surface," Rancière explains, "is not merely a geometric composition of lines. It is a certain distribution of the sensible."⁵⁰ By this he means that those spaces we recognize as properly political spaces, surfaces upon which political action takes place, are subject to what I have been calling a regime of perception, where our modes of perceiving and the micropolitical strategies that direct our perceptive attentions determine the nature, shape, and form an appearance can take. What is more, these dynamics also determine our modes of attending to phenomena: in the case of reading and writing, to continue with the example discussed above, our eyes follow the words from left to right on a page (moving from the top left-hand side to the bottom right, in the case of most North Atlantic pagination typesets and word processing programs): this is a distribution of perception along a surface made up of a geometric composition of lines. And this regime of perception, with its distributions and assignments of attention, has repercussions for what we consider a legitimate mode of sense making. A distribution of the sensible addresses the modes of attending to the world that align our organoleptic practices with our bodily postures, our cognitive attunements, and our practices of sense making. Thus, the partition or division of the sensible (*partage du sensible*) is "the cutting up [*decoupage*] of the perceptual world that anticipates, through its sensible evidence, the distribution of shares and social parties. And this distribution itself presupposes a cutting up of what is visible and what is not, of what can be heard and what cannot, of what is noise and what is speech."⁵¹

The apportioning of perception creates geometric outlines that establish a surface upon which value might fluidly circulate. This, in the end, is the basis of Rancière's category of "the police" at the heart of his critique of Althusser.⁵² Contradicting the claim of interpellation, he explains how Althusser's petty officer is not an agent of interruption, as the account of recognition through interpellation might suggest. Rather, the main ambition of the police is to increase the flow of circulation, to move traffic along when the traffic lights

don't work, if you will. Rancière's "there is nothing to see here" of the police order contravenes Althusser's "Hey, you there!" by showing us that the work of the police (and what Deleuze and Guattari will also call the work of "the organization of the organs of the organism"⁵³) is to ensure the proper circulation of things within a system so as not to leave unaccounted the supplemental elements whose value has, as of yet, been unassigned. A distribution of the sensible is at one and the same time a modality for the assignation of value, or a criterion of judgment.

Dissensus, then, is Rancière's synonym for politics: it is not the opposition or disagreement of interests between established groups in any dynamic system but rather is "the production, within a determined, sensible world, of a given that is heterogeneous to it."⁵⁴ Dissensus thus refers to the emergence of a heterology extraneous to a common world of perceiving and, through that emergence, a disruption of the mechanisms that enable the fluidity of the operation. Dissensus is an interruption that disarticulates the distributions of perception that enabled its own emergence. In this regard, Rancière concludes, "politics is aesthetic in that it makes visible what had been excluded from the perceptual field, and in that it makes audible what used to be inaudible."⁵⁵ That is, dissensus is an aesthetico-political moment that results in the reconfiguration of the regimes of perception that seize our attention, so that we can no longer assume the legislative authority (or logical priority) of any one form of perception.

For this reason it becomes impossible to equate Rancière's claims about visibility and audibility with a politics of recognition. That is, it's not at all the case that dissensus makes it so that we recognize noise as speech, or recognize a particular group as counting as part of a larger genus; rather, dissensus refers to the ways in which the dynamics of recognition delimit the possibilities of visibility and sayability. Recognition, in this regard, would fall under the auspices of the police order's organization of circulation; or, as Deleuze might say, recognition requires analogy to the extent that it requires a "methodological continuity in the perception of resemblances."⁵⁶ This is because a politics of recognition presupposes that there is always an order in place that may be recognized and that can count

as a standard of audibility and visibility. Dissensus, on the other hand, disrupts the perceptual continuities required to endorse recognition; it not only reconfigures the field of appearance of politics but also—and crucially—the processes of perceptual subjectification by which individual and collective human bodies constitute themselves as appearances.

The problem with Deleuze's indistinction, Rancière thus explains in thoroughly Deleuzian terms, is its implicit atomism: "no other fraternity is normally formed, only atoms and groups of atoms, accidents and their incessant modifications."⁵⁷ The atomistic nature of indistinction, in other words, takes from us the power to organize. Whereas Rancière imagines dissensus as comprising both the power of disfiguration and reconfiguration of the perceptual world—and thus, *ceteris paribus*, the power to act as the political supplement to a regime of resemblances that is always already exclusive—he does not imagine in Deleuze a similar possibility of reconfiguration. In short, Rancière does not see in Deleuze a strong account of relationality, and if it is true that Deleuze substitutes the British empiricists for the German idealists, his disgust with judgment is so intense that it undervalues the play of relationality so prevalent in eighteenth-century accounts of sensation.

There is a sense in which Rancière's accusation of atomism is excessive: Deleuze does have a rich account of relationality both in his discussion of the threefold nature of repetition and, in his work with Guattari, on the forces of territorialization and assemblage. But there is also a sense in which Rancière's claim is equally accurate. Deleuze's indistinction is taken with Kant's idea of immediacy, and immediacy is an account of aesthetic experience that is radically individuating: it isolates the figures of experience and by isolating them, disarticulates them. It describes, in short, a state of stupor that dismembers the common grounds for referring to the world. But though this moment accurately describes Deleuze's account of indistinction and its Kantian origins, it is no less an accurate account of Rancière's dissensus: dissensus refers precisely to that aesthetico-political moment of heterogeneity Kant described in his *Critique of Judgment*. The disinterested interest one experiences in a judgment of the beautiful is the

result of an interruption of the networks of distribution that grant us a common ground. Disinterest, disfiguration, and dissensus are the names given to this experience of sensation.

The claim I defend in this chapter is that Deleuze's and Rancière's aesthetico-political reflections carry an indebtedness to a radical democratic moment in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. I describe that moment, as Kant does, in terms of his antinormative account of aesthetic experience resulting from the durational intensity of immediacy, and the disinterested interest consequent to the moment of capture in an aesthetic encounter. In the following chapters I keep in play the triangulation of this theoretical moment elaborated by Kant, Deleuze, and Rancière, as well as the aesthetic, political, and ethical tensions such a triangulation engenders.

CHAPTER TWO

The Piazza, the *Edicola*, and the Noise of the Utterance

As to why I appear today in this unaccustomed garb, you shall now hear, if only you will not begrudge lending your ears to my discourse—not those ears, to be sure, which you carry to sermons, but those for which you are accustomed to prick up for mountebanks in the marketplace, for clowns and jesters, the ears which, in the old days, our friend Midas inclined to the god Pan. DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

From the clamor of voices overrunning and breaking up the field of statements comes a mumble that escapes the control of speakers and that violates the supposed division between speaking individuals. MICHEL DE CERTEAU

In March 2000, thousands of chocolatiers took to the piazzas of Italy to showcase their chocolate. It was an odd scene because it could easily have been confused with one of many commercial endeavors. In this case, however, the public preparation of chocolate was meant as a protest against new standards instituted by the European Choco-