

An aerial photograph of a landscape divided into several rectangular panels, resembling a quilt or a patchwork of different terrains. The panels are separated by dark, possibly wooden or metal, borders. The colors of the panels vary: some are dark blue, some are light blue, some are green, and some are white or light grey. The overall effect is a geometric, abstract representation of a natural landscape.

THE POLITICAL SUBLIME

MICHAEL J. SHAPIRO

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**THOUGHT IN THE ACT** *A series edited by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi*

**THE POLITICAL SUBLIME** MICHAEL J. SHAPIRO

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For Hannah

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## INTRODUCTION THE INSISTENCE OF THE SUBLIME

This investigation is my second engagement with Immanuel Kant's *Analytic of the Sublime*. In my first analysis of that analytic, I was intrigued by Kant's ambivalence. While Kant saw an encounter with an object of beauty (in his *Analytic of the Beautiful*) as an event that yields harmonious universalizing accord among the subject's diverse mental faculties, promising a consensus among subjects, a "subjective necessity," his confidence in the possibility of such a consensus was shaken when he explored the experience of the sublime. Influenced by Edmund Burke's account of the terror of the sublime, an object or event so vast and/or sudden that one's imagination is immobilized and attempts to make sense and verbalize the feeling are stymied, Kant recognized that in the experience of the sublime one's mind is in disarray. He admitted that in this kind of experience, where pain and discord reigns (at least initially), it's hard to be convinced that subjective necessity can result. Although Kant was ultimately unwilling to abandon his commitment to a *sensus communis* and accept the enduring fragility and singularity of subjectivity he had discovered when he turned to the sublime (he purported to rescue subjective necessity by recurring to his *Critique of Practical Reason*, where he proffers a universalizing moral consensus), others have pursued the radical political implications he refused to accept. As I put it in my original engagement with his argument, "[Kant's] inability to establish the subjective necessity he sought when he evoked the encounter

with the sublime opens up the possibility of a plurality of loci of enunciation and . . . challenges . . . those reigning political discourses that depend for the cogency on naturalizing or rendering necessary contingent modes of facticity.”<sup>1</sup>

My return to the sublime in this investigation engages Kant’s Analytic of the Sublime from a somewhat different angle, prompted by the way the sublime kept coming up in my recent investigation of political temporalities, in which, as I moved from example to example, I found myself being ambushed by the sublime. It’s a concept that manifests a high degree of insistence (albeit it with the help of astute commentators).<sup>2</sup> Relevant to many political concerns, the concept of the sublime tends to flash up as soon as one contemplates the extent to which there is a challenge to one’s imagination because of an experience’s immense and difficult to comprehend scope.

The persistent relevance of the concept of the sublime is owed in no small measure to Kant’s enduring influence. He wasn’t exaggerating when he characterized his philosophical intervention as a Copernican Revolution in philosophy. His three critiques are a revolutionary event in the history of thought. The attention they summon is owed primarily to Kant’s elaboration of the subject’s active role in constituting experience, which continues to provoke and nourish critical thinking. In particular, Kant’s Third Critique, concerned with aesthetic judgment, still inspires politically oriented investigation in a wide variety of disciplines. After centuries of scholarly engagement, its implications have not been exhausted, even though it has attracted strong criticism from thinkers who have convincingly resisted Kant’s pious hope for a universal sensibility, a piety that Kant himself undermined (even as he sought to rescue it) when he saw it imperiled as he proceeded to his Analytic of the Sublime.

In this investigation I again contest Kant’s commitment to a universalizing *sensus communis*. However, the pluralization to which I turn (an assumption that there exist multiple, often oppositional communities of sense that pre- and remediate events) derives from the way artistic and cultural texts intervene and mediate the experience of the sublime. Heeding the implications of those interventions enables the primary contribution I hope to make: the articulation of a politics of aesthetics that can capture the political implications of catastrophic events. Crucially, the textual hopscotch that moves my analysis along in each chapter (a writing method I address below) presumes a revision of the temporal process that Kant attributed to the sublime experience. Where Kantian temporality is constituted as a

dynamic of mentality—a rapid and wholly cognitive movement from one’s initial (and painful) apprehension of the sublime to a pleasurable comprehension, as one recognizes that one’s reasoning mind is greater than anything nature can dish out—I side with those who defer that dynamic and displace mentality with textuality, focusing on a negotiation among diverse mediations that keep events from achieving definitive consensual closure. The alteration in the temporal frame with which the sublime is thought provides an opening to an analysis of how sublime experiences activate diverse sense-making communities within the body politic. And most significantly for purposes of my investigations throughout my various chapters, it provides for a political apprehension of the way events endure as subjects of ongoing political engagements in which they are recovered and reinterpreted.

### A Political Sublime?

What then is the “political sublime”? Some have seen a turn to the sublime as politically conservative. For example, Donald Pease insists, “Despite all the *revolutionary* rhetoric invested in the term, the sublime has, in what we could call the politics of historical formation, always served conservative purposes.”<sup>3</sup> Pease’s “always” is now dated. He is correct in applying that insistence to Kant: “the sublime, instead of disclosing a revolutionary way of being other than the ethical, in Kant’s rendition, is reduced to strictly ethical duties. . . . the [Kantian] sublime makes the formation of an ethical character *sound* as if it is a rebellious task.”<sup>4</sup> And he may be right about the various other approaches to the sublime that he identifies, those who—operating within a variety of disciplines, such as literature and history, among others—view the sublime as disruptive of traditional normativities, only to recuperate them or posit durational shifts with no political consequences.

However, the influence of critical philosophical approaches—notably those of Gilles Deleuze, J.-F. Lyotard, and Jacques Rancière—have since encouraged versions of a politics of aesthetics within which disruptions (those of sublime experiences among others) yield critical political challenges to sense making.<sup>5</sup> While Deleuze and Lyotard develop their politically oriented aesthetics with an emphasis on Kant’s *Analytic of the Sublime*, Rancière favors Kant’s *Analytic of the Beautiful* as a starting point.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, in Rancière’s appropriation of Kant’s *Third Critique*, it’s fair to say that for him “politics is sublime” (my emphasis); it is sublime in the sense that politics

is an event based on an “aesthetic break.”<sup>7</sup> Rancière’s political focus on the disparities that emerge as new voices make political claims is in accord with the way I want to conceive a sublime politics. For me (as for Rancière among other post-Kantians), the crucial political initiatives that challenge authoritative and institutionalized modes of power and authority are precipitated by disruptive events that provoke the formation of oppositional communities of sense, which register the existence of multiple experiential and thought worlds. The political sensibility that emerges from the revisions of Kant’s exploration of the aesthetic faculty is well summarized in Rancière’s remark that “the aesthetic nature of politics” directs our attention not to “a specific single world” but to “a world of competing worlds.”<sup>8</sup> The attention-grabbing experience of the sublime therefore leads not (as Kant had hoped) toward a shared moral sensibility but to an ethico-political sensibility that recognizes the fragilities of our grasp of experience and enjoins engagement with a pluralist world in which the in-common must be continually negotiated.

How then can we characterize the narrative trajectory in which the concept of the sublime has emerged to facilitate such an aesthetics of politics? Deleuze provides a model. He suggests that concepts are historical dramas.<sup>9</sup> Heeding that suggestion, much of chapter 1 records the historical drama of the concept of the sublime as I track it from Longinus to Kant and thereafter to contributions of post-Kantian thinking, with an emphasis on how revisions of Kant’s temporal account of the sublime experience open analysis to renegotiations of the meanings and implications of catastrophic events. Here I want to invoke the beginning of that drama with attention to the way Longinus’s textual practice inspires the way my analyses are composed.

### **Writing, Method, and the Sublime**

Longinus, whose attributed treatises inaugurate the concept of the sublime, addressed the question of the organizing principle of a compelling treatise. Putting the matter simply (deceivably so), he wrote, “In every systematic treatise two things are required. The first is a statement of the subject; the other, which although second in order ranks higher in importance, is an indication of the methods by which we may attain our end.”<sup>10</sup> Given those injunctions, it’s surprising how elliptical Longinus’s treatises seem to be. They are distinguishable more for their poesis than for their explicit theoretical argumentation. Nevertheless, as Neil Hertz points out, in the case

of Longinus's treatise on Homer's Battle of the Gods, "Longinus' admirers, struck by the force of the treatise, are usually willing to release him from the strictures of theoretical discourse and allow him the license of a poet; they are likely to appreciate his transgressions of conventional limits without ever calling them into question . . . It has been left to more skeptical readers, wary of Longinus' 'transports,' to draw attention to his odd movements of thought." Among the critical responses to which Hertz refers is W. K. Wimsatt's complaint about Longinus's "'sliding' from one theoretical distinction to another, a slide 'which seems to harbor a certain duplicity and invalidity.'" Hertz grants that "a 'slide' is observable again and again in the treatise, and not merely from one theoretical distinction to another [so that one finds] oneself attending to a quotation, a fragment of analysis, a metaphor—some interestingly resonant bit of language that draws one into quite another system of relationships," but he goes on to rescue the value of Longinus's style.<sup>11</sup>

I want to dwell briefly on Hertz's rescue of Longinus's "sliding" because it helps account for my style of analysis/writing, its "odd movements." What Hertz shows convincingly is that the "movement" of Longinus's treatise "is clearly not linear; it does not run in tandem with the progress of rhetorical argument from topic to topic but is in some ways cumulative—that is, at certain points one becomes aware of a thickening of texture." And he adds, "Longinus seems to be working . . . at locating his discourse close to the energies of his authors . . . [that for example while approaching what he regards as sublime writing] . . . he too is drawn into a sublime turning, and what he is moved to produce is not merely an analysis illustrative of the sublime but further figures for it."<sup>12</sup> In short, Hertz suggests that Longinus's sliding evokes a flow of textual fragments that are impressively adequate to (even expressive of) his subject; Longinus (as Hertz makes evident) informs through form rather than through conventional linear explication. He doesn't, as his above quoted remarks imply, begin with a simple statement of his subject and go on to explicate his method. To borrow from an approach described by Walter Benjamin about *his* mode of analysis, "literary montage," Longinus "shows" rather than tells.<sup>13</sup> Without suggesting that my text bears favorable comparison with those of Longinus (whose immense learning and lyricism are daunting), I am moved nevertheless to try to achieve an instructive account of the compositions that constitute the investigations in this book, which proceed through a series of textual engagements.

To figure my approach to writing-as-method, we can assume that metaphorically the writer is standing on the bank of a river whose rapidly moving current would render perilous an attempt at wading to get across to the other side (the consummation of the analysis). However, there are many large stones that break the surface and lead in various patterns across the river, making possible a dry and safe crossing if one can leap from stone to stone. If we imagine that each stone is a text and that although there is more than one configuration of stones that affords a safe navigation of the crossing, only some (textual) configurations provide an effective thickening of the argument (one could find oneself leaping onto a stone from which no subsequent leaps will work to make an effective crossing, i.e., to amplify the analysis). Although there is more than one workable configuration, there have to be compelling reasons for the trajectory of leaps, which become evident when each stone—each textual choice—makes its own case by adding to the analysis without requiring extensive meta-textual justification. Presuming such a writing method, the narrative in each of my chapters is a textual hopscotch in which each leap adds an encounter with a text to thicken the analysis. However, before moving to an elaboration of some of the specifics of the textual analyses in each chapter, I want to address the critical implications of textual engagement.

### Textuality

Attentive to Roland Barthes's theoretically pregnant remarks on the historical movement from work to text, I treat a text as a "methodological field" rather than simply as an object or a "fragment of substance, occupying part of the space of books."<sup>14</sup> For Barthes a text "cannot be contained in a hierarchy, even in a simple division of genres . . . What constitutes it is . . . its subversive force in respect to old classifications."<sup>15</sup> And crucially with respect to my concern with deferring the movement from apprehension to comprehension, for Barthes a "work . . . functions as a general sign . . . [which] should represent an institutional category of the civilization of the Sign. The Text, on the contrary, practices the infinite deferment of the signified . . . [although] its field is that of the signifier [it] must not be conceived as 'the first stage of meaning' . . . [but] as its *deferred action*."<sup>16</sup>

Taking up Barthes's distinction and playing it into a challenge to disciplinary allegiances, John Mowitt sees textuality as succeeding where discursive practices fail their critical mission. For example, looking at the historical

discourse on sexuality, he notes that (as Foucault points out in his *History of Sexuality*), “Freud remained ensnared with the apparatus of sexuality.”<sup>17</sup> Seeing such discursive formations as caught within the confines of disciplinary fields, Mowitt treats the text as an “antidisciplinary field” rather than an intra-disciplinary object: “the text is divided against itself—not only in terms of the way it straddles the domain of examples and models, but also in terms of the way it links the constitution of examples to the utopic, to the not yet integrated,” resulting I would add in an opening of the spaces that the discursive practices of disciplinary orthodoxies have closed.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover and importantly for the sense that I derive from texts, for Mowitt, “the ‘plural’ character of the text (cf. Barthes) has less to do with some bland notion of multiple meanings, than with the empowerment that enables our constructions to be ceaselessly challenged—not merely contested at the level of conclusions, but subverted at the level of disciplinary legitimation.”<sup>19</sup> Jacques Rancière has a similar take on the closural aspects of disciplinary knowledge. Disciplinary sensibility (for example in the case of sociology) has historically reconstituted “the social fabric such that individuals and groups at a given place would have their *ethos*, the ways of feeling and thinking . . . correspond to their place and to a collective harmony.” Like other disciplines, it is part of a “scientific war against the allodoxy of judgments . . . [and against the] ‘anomie of behavior.’”<sup>20</sup> Rancière privileges “indisciplinary thought . . . thought which recalls the context of the war . . . In order to do so, it must practice a certain ignorance. It must ignore disciplinary boundaries to thereby restore their status as weapons in a dispute.”<sup>21</sup>

Reviewing Mowitt’s and Rancière’s versions of resisting the closural institution-supporting effects of disciplinary practices takes me back to why I have been intrigued by the ambivalence that emerged when Kant confronted the problem of the sublime-subjective finality problem. As I noted in my first encounter with Kant’s texts, in the discipline of political science (as practiced by both international relations and political theory scholars) the focus has been on Kant’s political essays. In pursuit of his ideological positions, they have sought to draw Kant into their disciplinary concerns by sifting through the treatises for content with which they can describe Kant’s politics. Finding myself taking a different direction, I treated the political implications that come from an encounter with Kant’s treatise on aesthetic judgment. The question I raised was about how to think the political after Kant.<sup>22</sup>

Mowitt comes to a similar conclusion with respect to literary disciplines. Examining the manifesto of the *Tel Quel* declaration (in the late 1970s),

which called for a separation of literature from ideology, he asks, “What is at stake in the separation of literature and ideology called for in the declaration?” “Obviously a great deal,” he responds, “but at a certain rudimentary level what is implied concerns one’s ability to read a literary text without rifling its content for statements illustrating the text’s adherence to prevalent ideological positions.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, witnessing the struggle within the text of the Third Critique, which for Kant recalled his philosophical project as a whole, helped me to see the text as a philosophically engendered methodological field with implications for political analysis. Encouraged to seek realization of those implications, in my earlier engagement with Kant’s sublime I staged an encounter with a cinematic text, Stephen Frears’s film *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002), which shows subjects in disarray, caught up in a very concrete, contemporary global economic sublime—a vast field of exchange that brings together those desperate enough to sell their organs, those precarious enough to be forced to assist in the process, those predatory enough to run the business, and those privileged enough to be buyers. The film’s spatial trajectory maps some of the spaces of those different types, revealing a radically divided London, differentiated by alternative trajectories of arrival and subsequent habitation (which has created an abyss between the temporary population of well-off tourists and the desperate, recently arriving, mostly illegal refugees). And its narrative trajectory, within which the encounters among different lifeworlds display the contingencies of global forces, provides a text that opens itself to a wide variety of critical interpretations that disrupt traditional ways of reading the city of London. I take a similar approach to the texts to which I turn in this investigation.

## The Chapters

As was the case in my original iteration of a politics of the sublime, in this investigation I deploy a philosophical analytic derived from post-Kantian versions of the implications of sublime experiences on artistic and cultural texts, this time with a more extensive set of applications and with a more elaborated set of reflections on sublimity.

My applications in the various chapters treat both immediate and longer-term catastrophes. Among the former are the earthquakes that constitute the bookends of chapter 1 (a reaction to the 1989 San Francisco earthquake inaugurates the chapter and reactions to the 1995 Kobe earthquake, fictionally rendered in Haruki Murakami’s stories in his *After the Quake*, end

the chapter). The last chapter, “The 9/11 Terror Sublime,” is also about an immediate catastrophe, the destruction of the World Trade Center and the loss of thousands of lives.

The middle three chapters—“the racial sublime,” “the nuclear sublime,” and the “industrial sublime”—treat longer-term catastrophes (associated with the violence of the color line, nuclear poisoning in the American West and the Pacific, and the damage to land- and peoplescapas from the machine age onward, respectively). In all the chapters, my emphasis is on the way the meanings and implications of events are mediated in diverse cultural and artistic texts. Within each of those investigations, I enlist philosophical frames that “interfere” with the texts that constitute the trajectory of my politically oriented textual mediations of the apprehension–comprehension temporal gap.<sup>24</sup>

Chapter 1, which as I noted, focuses on the “natural sublime” (specifically earthquakes), articulates theorizations of the sublime—both Kantian and Freudian (where the latter is framed by Freud’s concept of the uncanny)—with a progression of illustrative texts. In confrontation with those texts, I elaborate a series of conceptual strategies while foregrounding a substantive theme, the role of mediating authorities who purport to enable the filling of the apprehension–comprehension gap. The authority on which I focus much of the attention is the “father” (in both actual and symbolic versions), with special attention to the father function in Ingmar Bergman’s film *Winter Light* (a text to which I return in subsequent chapters). In the film the “father” is a church pastor whose paternal function is impaired because he has lost his faith. And thematically as well as analytically, the chapter is shaped by my primary “aesthetic subjects”—small girls (one actual and one fictional)—who are confronted with the very large, imagination-challenging natural events, the above-mentioned San Francisco and Kobe earthquakes.<sup>25</sup>

In chapter 2, on the “racial sublime,” my analysis is articulated through the writings of what I refer to as African American organic intellectuals (a long list in which the key texts are by James Baldwin and Ta-Nehisi Coates). Treating the trajectory of the racial sublime from the plantation era to the present, my emphasis is on the perils that black parents have faced in keeping their children and young relatives alive. That problem is the main focus of Spike Lee’s film *Clockers* (1995), which I contrast with Paul Brickman’s *Risky Business* (1983), in which a white family’s problem is getting their son into an Ivy League college so that he can be sure to achieve their level of affluence.

To characterize the contemporary “racial sublime,” the still vast oppressive structure that imperils black lives, I note the extent to which contemporary broadcast and social media have made that peril evident to white America, quoting Michael Eric Dyson’s and Clyde Woods’s remarks on how images of Hurricane Katrina disproportionately affect black lives—Dyson: “[It] has become evident in a way not previously appreciated by white America, ‘the lived experience of race feels like terror for black folk.’” Woods: “The disasters surrounding Hurricane Katrina revealed the impaired contemporary social vision of every segment of society. Despite mountains of communication and surveillance devices, America was still shocked by the revelation of impoverishment, racism, brutality, corruption, and official neglect in a place it thought it knew intimately.” In this chapter, as in the case in chapter 1, I also turn to musical texts to indicate the divisions (as well as the convergences) between white and black communities of sense. I note the way musical reception of blues has onto-political significance for much of black America—for example Bessie Smith’s song “Crazy Blues” (1920), which while seemingly politically innocent to white Americans, “has consistently registered itself among much of the African American assemblage as ‘an insurrectionary social text.’” However, I also treat the way music has in some cases attenuated the color line, a line subject to the historical “turbulences” that I address.

In chapter 3, on the “nuclear sublime,” my main focus is on the way the imagining-challenging apprehension of the overwhelmingly sublime experience of the first nuclear explosions was turned into a purposive, government-sponsored militarized mode of comprehension in which the victims (after those killed in the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) have been sickened by radiation poisoning (from mining, nuclear storage dumps, and testing): army personnel from the testing, nearby resident Native Americans from all three, and Pacific Islanders from the testing and residual radiation since. As many have pointed out, the geography of nuclear poisoning was constituted as “sacrifice zones,” where the peoples affected were regarded as lives less worthy of protection. The chapter proceeds with texts and counter-texts—for example the Euro-American landscape paintings that erased Indianness as they pictured the “first American sublime,” followed by the texts of Native American artists and writers who, with images and narratives, described the lethal effects of nuclearization on the American West (the “second American sublime”). And I enlist texts by and about Pacific Islanders that counter the official verdict that the remoteness of the Pacific justified its selection for atomic testing.

The chapter closes with a reading of Terrence Malick's film *The Thin Red Line*, which juxtaposes a landscape-attuned, peaceful Pacific Island lifeworld to the devastating violence of the military advances on the Pacific Islands during World War II. I treat the film as an encounter of technologies of perception—those that failed to discern worthy life in the spaces selected for nuclear poisoning versus those, such as Malick's cinematic rendering of Pacific Islanders, which permit a devalued world “to emerge from the shadows that other technologies of perception have created” and as a result allow those people and their world to emerge from the shadows, become objects of empathy, and achieve the “ethical weight” to which they are entitled.

Chapter 4, on the “industrial sublime,” is shaped by the imagery of the “machine in the garden” (Leo Marx's title in a monograph about how industrialization displaced Jefferson's pastoral ideal). Beginning with a discussion of the paintings of urban scenes that register large industrial development, I move on to an extended reading of a film that features a train journey westward, Jim Jarmusch's film *Dead Man*, to treat the westward spread of industrial technology, mainly steel manufacturing, which provided the railway system (tracks and locomotives) and the weapons that facilitated the assault on Native America. The subsequent textual trajectory involves texts that register the development and decline of factories with an examination of U.S. ruins and an extended reading of Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Red Desert*, which through the imposition of color, creates a chromatic dissonance that articulates an ambivalence toward the consequences of industrialization in the vicinity of the city of Ravenna. The chapter ends with readings of texts that visualize and comment on sweatshops, which constitute the contemporary stage in the historical narrative of industrial demise and its subsequent restoration, as the factory has moved from the former centers of industrialization to the third world, with its exploitable labor pools. The last text receiving extended commentary in the chapter is a documentary focused on a sweatshop in Indonesia that manufactures Nike shoes and sports clothing.

Chapter 5, on the “9/11 terror sublime,” begins with focus on Stan Douglas's installation *The Secret Agent* (2015), in which he remediates Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* (1907) by switching the venue from early twentieth-century London to Lisbon in the 1970s at a revolutionary moment and by decentering the perceptual perspectives on the event by displaying the action on multiple screens so that what constitutes “terror” becomes radically contestable. After a discussion of organic versus contemporary

textual communities and the texts to which they are allegiant, the chapter turns to an extensive engagement with Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man* (2005), whose many aesthetic subjects are on different temporal trajectories, pulling in diverse ideational directions, as they either perpetrate or seek to come to terms with the destruction of the World Trade Center towers.

The analysis of DeLillo's text is followed by a turn to Art Spiegelman's commix version of the event, *In the Shadow of No Towers*, whose graphic form creates a narrative space with no commanding center. With many repetitions of the images from the event, the text undermines any totalizing frame with which the event can be captured. What Spiegelman's text provides is akin to the contribution of DeLillo's novel. It issues a political challenge to the dominant narratives created by the mainstream media and U.S. government. It is therefore fitting that I follow that text with an analysis of a video film that precedes the 9/11 event and effectively premediates it, Johan Grimonprez's *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997), a montage of archive footage of the history of plane hijacking within a nonlinear narrative aimed at displaying and challenging the way broadcast media have hijacked the hijackings.

Finally, because both the target of the attack and the city of New York's memorial response to the event are architectural, I close the chapter with a focus on the difference between monumental architecture, which tends to close off alternative historical narratives while stifling practices of memory, and architectural forms that feature transparency and ambiguity to resist narrative closure and open a space for contention among alternative communities of sense. Providing the bridge to the afterword, which focuses on the critical effect of interventions in duration, the chapter ends with a reiteration of what is central to the political significance of the texts I have engaged throughout the investigation, the art–community of sense relationship that informs what I mean by the “political sublime.”

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 Shapiro, "The Sublime Today," 699.
- 2 See Shapiro, *Politics and Time*.
- 3 Pease, "Sublime Politics," 275.
- 4 Pease, "Sublime Politics," 276.
- 5 See, for example, Panagia, *The Poetics of Political Thinking* and *The Political Life of Sensation*.
- 6 For a review of alternative politics of aesthetics that compares the three thinkers, see Zepke, "Contemporary Art—Beautiful or Sublime?"
- 7 The phrase "politics is sublime" is the title of an analysis of the ways a Kant-influenced politics of aesthetics emerges in the thinking of Hannah Arendt and Jacques Rancière; emphasis added. See Dikeç, "Politics Is Sublime." The term "aesthetic break" is from Rancière, "Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community."
- 8 Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus," 6.
- 9 See Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatization."
- 10 Longinus.
- 11 Hertz, "A Reading of Longinus," 1–2.
- 12 Hertz, "A Reading of Longinus," 8.
- 13 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 460.
- 14 Barthes, "From Work to Text," 156–157.
- 15 Barthes, "From Work to Text," 157.
- 16 Barthes, "From Work to Text," 158.
- 17 Mowitt, *Text*.
- 18 Mowitt, *Text*, 44, 45.
- 19 Mowitt, *Text*, 46.
- 20 Rancière, "Thinking between Disciplines," 7.
- 21 Rancière, "Thinking between Disciplines," 9.
- 22 Christine Battersby draws similar inspiration from Kant's ambivalence, finding it "politically useful" because of how it opens a way to "rethink the subject in modernity and postmodernity": Battersby, *The Sublime, Terror, and Human Difference*, 193.
- 23 Mowitt, *Text*, 84.

- 24 On the “interference” that philosophy enacts in artistic texts, applied by Deleuze to cinema, see Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 280. The concept is applied to literature in Casarino, *Modernity at Sea*.
- 25 Elsewhere I have theorized aesthetics subjects as characters (primarily those in artistic texts) who “are invented less to reveal their psychic or attitudinal orientations than to reveal the forces at work in the spaces within which they move and to display the multiplicity of subject positions historically created within those spaces”: Shapiro, *The Time of the City*, 7, or as characters “whose movements and actions (both purposive and non purposive) map and often alter experiential, politically relevant terrains”: Shapiro, *Studies in Trans-Disciplinary Method*, ix.

## One. Toward a Political Sublime

- 1 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 97.
- 2 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 106, 99.
- 3 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 101.
- 4 The quotation is from Zepke, “Contemporary Art—Beautiful or Sublime?,” 14.
- 5 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 115.
- 6 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 120.
- 7 Lindner, “The Passagen-Werk, the Berlin Kindheit, and the Archaeology of the ‘Recent Past,’” 26.
- 8 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 179.
- 9 Lacan, “On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis,” 217.
- 10 Lacan, “On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis,” 217.
- 11 Lacan, “Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*,” 12.
- 12 Lacan, “On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis,” 219.
- 13 Wolff, “Winter Light.”
- 14 Foucault, “The Father’s No,” 82.
- 15 The quotation is from Stone, “Split Subjects, Not Atoms,” 189.
- 16 Stone, “Split Subjects, Not Atoms,” 179.
- 17 Stone, “Split Subjects, Not Atoms,” 186.
- 18 The quotations are from *Longinus on the Sublime*, 8–9.
- 19 *Longinus on the Sublime*, 42.
- 20 *Longinus on the Sublime*, 104–105.
- 21 Sartre, *The Family Idiot*, 127.
- 22 Sartre, *The Family Idiot*, 128.
- 23 Shaw, *The Sublime*, 2.
- 24 The quoted expression of Kant’s is taken from Klein, “Kant’s Sunshine,” 28.
- 25 *Longinus on the Sublime*, 46.
- 26 *Longinus on the Sublime*, 75.
- 27 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 28.
- 28 *Longinus on the Sublime*, 64–65.