The Social and the Aesthetic:
For a Post-Bourdieuian Theory of Cultural Production

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In this article I set out some methodological principles for the sociology of art, a sub-discipline that I intend immediately to broaden conceptually by shifting the terms from 'art' to 'cultural production'. Such a shift may appear consonant with several strands in twentieth century sociocultural theory, from Walter Benjamin's advocacy of 'the author as producer', to Raymond Williams's cultural materialism, to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production, to the American production of culture school.[1] But while I draw elements from these diverse predecessors, and while all of these writers found it productive to distance the study of the production of culture from the idealist assumptions attached to the notion of art, the approach that I advocate is not reducible to them. It is best approached through a critique of Bourdieu's paradigm, arguably the most influential in contemporary art sociology, which I come to later. The shift to cultural production suggests the utility of overcoming the boundaries that demarcate the sociology of art from adjacent fields, augmenting the sociological repertoire with reference to fertile developments in anthropology, cultural and media studies, the music disciplines, and art and cultural history, with the potential to broaden not only the objects but the analytics of the sociology of art. In particular, I bring sociology into dialogue with generative thinking in contemporary anthropology. In doing so, my intention is not only to propose new methodological directions, but to indicate how this makes it possible to address a number of theoretical and conceptual problems that have seen little progress in recent years. Probing the limits of Bourdieu's contribution, I suggest that an explanatory theory of cultural production requires reinvention in relation to five key themes: aesthetics and the cultural object; the place of institutions; agency and subjectivity; questions of history, temporality and change; and problems of value and judgement. These themes are deeply connected; each can be seen as ultimately subordinate to the first, that is, to providing a non-reductive account of the aesthetic in theorising cultural production. Addressing the five themes through recent anthropological writings leads me to develop an analytics of mediation. My contention is that the sociology of art requires such a transformation in order to flesh out a sociological hermeneutics, one that takes on board aspects of structuralist and post-structuralist theory as well as new ways of conceptualising temporality. In pursuing this program I advocate a novel conception of the relation between theoretical model and empirical research, one that I term post-positivist empiricism.[2]

To develop these arguments a primary reference point is my own research, which encompasses both distinctive media – music, art, television, and new media - and the full gamut of Bourdieuian subfields, from mass media and popular culture to high culture and the avant-garde. The article takes a retrograde form. In the first half I develop the methodological principles by contrasting the contributions of the sociology and anthropology of art. In the second half I reveal the origins of these principles in my own work with reference to two ethnographic studies of influential cultural institutions, each elucidating the operations of important fields of contemporary Western cultural and knowledge production. The first ethnography focuses on a high-cultural organisation: the internationally renowned computer

[1] Benjamin 1982 (1934); Williams 1976, 1981; Bourdieu 1993; Peterson 1976, 2004, and Crane 1992.
[2] See also Osborne 1998, chapter 6: Barry 2001, pp. 21-2.

music institute IRCAM, the music department of the Centre Georges Pompidou.[3] This study interrogates the crisis of musical modernism in the late twentieth century, as well as its intimate entanglement with the development of computer hardware and software for music production and computer-aided scientific knowledge about music and sound.[4] The second ethnography, of the BBC and its industrial and political milieu, examines the transformation of public service broadcasting in Britain in the last decade under the combined impact of the 'new public management', a neo-liberal form of governance brought to Britain's public sector, commercialisation and globalisation.[5] Both ethnographies attempt to provide a substantively powerful analysis of these leading cultural institutions, probing the conditions for creativity in the two organisations, the causalities underlying these conditions, and how they influence what is produced: the music made at IRCAM, the BBC's television programs. The approach entails two injunctions: first, the need to acknowledge the specialisation of modern culture and knowledge by interrogating the historical specificity of each domain, its coherence and its differentiation; and second, that in tracing causality, we attend to the multiplicity of causes, including temporalities of different depth and quality and the contingency of their conjunction. I will say more about both in due course.

As a preliminary, it is instructive to survey the state of the sociology of art. It is a commonplace that it has defined itself largely in opposition to aesthetics, in terms both of deconstructing any claims for art's autonomy, and of analysing the social and historical determinations of aesthetic experience. Vera Zolberg, in her overview of the field, draws a distinction between approaches that study 'the art object as a social process' and those that analyse 'the art object sociologically'.[6] The former perspective, associated with Howard Becker and elements of the production of culture school, tends to be empiricist, taking an interactionist eye to the practices, technologies, conventions and divisions of labour entailed in the making of art.[7] On the basis of detailed case studies of artistic organisations, art is conceived as a social practice and as the collective construction of particular 'art worlds'. The latter, more theoretical orientation addresses art in relation to its social, economic, political and technological conditions. Whether in Hegelian, Marxian, Weberian or Adornian incarnations, this broad tradition commonly resorts to drawing homologies between art and its sociohistorical conditions. Robert Witkin, for example, reviving what he calls the 'grand version' of the sociology of art in the Hegelian mode of Panofsky and Hauser, draws parallels between art and social structure at the level of style, particularly with regard to the quality and degree of abstraction evident in perceptual processes, semiotic systems and social relations.[8] Bourdieu, in contrast, develops homologies at several levels in his account of culture and art, notably, in his analysis of the field of cultural production, between the 'space of works' and the 'space of producers and institutions of production';[9] and in his general social theory, between the consumption of art and social reproduction – thus, the unequal distribution of cultural capital both results from class positioning and contributes to its reproduction.[10]

[3] IRCAM is the Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique / Musique.
[4] Born 1995.
[5] Born 2005a.
[6] Zolberg 1990, chapters 3 and 4.
[7] Becker 1982, DiMaggio 1982, Peterson 1976, 2004.
[8] Witkin 1995, 2005.
[9] Bourdieu 1990a, p. 147.
[10] Bourdieu 1984. On the role of homologies in Bourdieu, see Jenkins 1992, chapter 4, and Swartz 1997, chapter 6, pp. 129-36.

For all the differences, as Zolberg acknowledges, much scholarship in the sociology of art is vulnerable to accusations of reductionism for failing to address the specificity of the aesthetic and of the art object.[11] Thus for Antoine Hennion, the classical forms of sociology when taken to the analysis of art, whether from critical theory, interactionism or constructivism, have 'always been less interested in creation, genius or the works "in themselves" than in what makes these categories appear as such'.[12] Against this background Zolberg argues for the necessity of a rapprochement between sociology and the humanities, one that would navigate between the extremes of decontextualised microanalytical studies and macrostructural theories that too often lack a clear periodisation and an account of linkages to 'middle levels of societal structures'.[13] But she does not explain how such a rapprochement can be put into practice, thereby leaving unresolved the problem of how the value-free sociology that she advocates can engage with the questions of form and aesthetics, and with the interpretive criticism, that are central to the humanities.[14] David Inglis, in a recent survey, identifies additional tensions, suggesting that the sociology of art is fuelled by an envious rivalry towards the humanities, a 'scepticism veering into cynicism' manifest in an imperative of exposure or revelation. This stance is evident in underlying convictions that culture and power are inextricably entwined, that cultural values are arbitrary expressions of the defense of social and economic interests, and that the forms of knowledge – art history, aesthetics – from the humanities involved in the study of art are irredeemably partial, while having greater institutionalised authority than sociology.[15] Suggesting that the antagonism may be mutual, Inglis cites Bourdieu's diagnosis that the sociology of art arouses in the humanities 'resistances that are quite analogous in their logic and manifestation to those encountered by psychoanalytical discourse'.[16] In response Inglis calls for a reflexive approach that would 'sociologically analyse the nature of one's sociological analysis of art' by recognising 'its own social conditions of possibility and operation'.[17] Yet it is difficult to see how such an involuted response can generate analyses more attuned to the substantive nature of the subject matter of the sociology of art. In this light it is arguable that the field has not seen much movement on these matters in the last two decades.[18]

Wolff's sociological aesthetics and aesthetics in recent social theory

The main exception to this state of affairs has been the work of Janet Wolff who from the early 1980s, as a central element in her reconstruction of the sociology of art, laid the groundwork for a sociological aesthetics. Her work builds on philosophy and art history as well as sociology and represents a sustained engagement with the challenge of theorising the specificity of art. Wolff argues productively that if 'the sociology of art is the study of the practices and institutions of artistic production', then this 'necessarily involves the study of aesthetic conventions'.[19] Warning of the impossibility of a value-free sociology, and in light of the universalising pretensions of bourgeois aesthetics, she calls for a fully historical

[11] Zolberg 1990, p. 212; and see Wolff 1983 (1993), chapter 2.
[12] Hennion 2003, p. 81.
[13] Zolberg 1990, p. 213
[14] This is not a new challenge for the sociology of art: Barnett (1959), surveying its intellectual roots, recommended that sociology collaborate with and learn from art history and criticism in order to gain 'technical knowledge' in matters of style, imagery and aesthetic conventions.
[15] Inglis 2005, p. 101.
[16] Bourdieu 1993b, p. 23, quoted in Inglis op cit., p. 103.
[17] Inglis op cit. pp. 108-9; and for a similar argument for reflexivity in the sociology of art, see Zolberg 1990, pp. 212-3.
[18] For a discussion of recent alternative approaches to aesthetics and the artwork, see de la Fuente 2007.
[19] Wolff 1981, p. 139.

investigation of the social location and ideological dimensions of aesthetic judgements, accompanied by a non-idealist, non-essentialist theory of aesthetic experience.

Four elements can be discerned in Wolff's project: first, 'taking as a topic of investigation that value already bestowed on works by their contemporaries and subsequent critics and audiences'; second, 'recognising the autonomy of the question of the particular kind of pleasure involved in past and present appreciation of the works themselves'; third, uncovering those 'aesthetic categories and judgements that inform the researcher's project';[20] and fourth, with reference to Foucault, analysing the 'specificity of the aesthetic in terms of the particular discursive practices that constitute it, while leaving open the possibility of relating [it] to extra-aesthetic factors'.[21] If Wolff's third element resonates with Gadamer's conception of understanding, in which our prior involvement and partiality should be taken not as a barrier to understanding but rather as its enabling condition,[22] the fourth recalls Foucault's method of archaeology. In a passage on painting in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault calls for a concern with 'whether space, distance, depth, colour, light…were not, at the period in question, considered, named, enunciated, and conceptualized in a discursive practice; and whether the knowledge that this discursive practice gives rise to was not embodied perhaps in theories and speculations,… forms of teaching and codes of practice, but also in processes, techniques, and even in the very gesture of the painter'. In this sense, Foucault contends, painting should be seen as 'shot through – and independently of scientific knowledge and philosophical themes - with the positivity of a knowledge'.[23]

Advocating a combination of sociologically-informed criticism with 'respect for the object', Wolff holds out the prospect of a sociological aesthetics located 'beyond traditional aesthetics'.[24] Yet a tension remains in her work between a deconstructive imperative – to demystify the concept of creativity and uncover how 'art always encodes values and ideology'[25] - and a positive or constructivist pursuit of the way that production is in immanent dialogue with aesthetic traditions and codes, which require to be understood in all their complexity. Extending her scheme, I will argue that a fifth component should be added to it: the need, when analysing any case of cultural production, for the researcher not only to endeavour to be reflexive about her own aesthetic prejudices (in Gadamer's sense), but, on this basis and informed by producers' and critics' exegeses on the art object in question, as well as by an understanding of its social and historical mediations and conditions, to offer a critical interpretation of the object. The question, to which I return, is how this can be done.

Ironically, if the figure of the aesthetic has been underdeveloped in the sociology of art, it has been to the fore in recent social theory, stimulated in part by Foucault's concern with recasting the nature of enlightenment in terms of an 'aesthetics of existence'.[26] Thus Scott Lash portrays aesthetic reflexivity as characteristic of late modernity.[27] He links this with increasingly specialised consumption based on proliferating distinctions between class fractions and along lines of gender and age, distinctions that are concretised in the symbolic properties of goods and that, through shared judgements of taste, aggregate to create new

[20] Wolff 1983, p. 107.
[21] Wolff 1983, p. 94.
[22] Gadamer 1975.
[23] Foucault 1972, p. 193-4.
[24] Wolff 1993, p. 115. The reference is to Benjamin and Osborne 1991, including Born 1991.
[25] Wolff 1981, pp. 138, 140.
[26] Foucault 1992, p. 12, and Foucault 1984.
[27] Lash 1993.

collective identities. Lash contends that such 'post-traditional *Gemeinschaften*' entail aesthetic reflexivity in that they are self-aware concerning the role of symbols in the creation of identity, are chosen, and entail 'identity risks'.[28] An alternative account comes from Thomas Osborne's reading of the aesthetic as a type of ethical practice, 'a positive practice of enlightenment'.[29] For Osborne, art provides a model of freedom; in artistic practice 'the creativity of what is new and the production of autonomy take on an exemplary importance precisely in so far as those are the problems that intrinsically confront all artists in so far as they are artists as opposed to anything else'.[30] Against this, with reference to Bourdieu, Osborne criticises those 'repetitive canons of a hostile critique of art' stoked by a 'resentful sociological' attitude.[31] There is no space to assess Lash's account as a theory of collective identity formation, nor Osborne's ethical defence of art's autonomy. But it is notable that in placing the aesthetic at the core of their social theories, Lash and Osborne detach it from its existence as a critical element in the expressive and material labours of cultural production. Moreover, in distinctive ways, both writers empty the aesthetic of its particular cultural and historical contents and risk returning it to a metaphysical plane. In relation to Osborne it is worth adding that only a sociohistorical analysis of the conditions of 'autonomy' and the 'new', and an assessment of what these terms mean in any era, can correct the problematic assumption that these qualities are invariant or intrinsic to art per se. Such an analysis need not involve hostile critique: in constructivist spirit, it would concern itself with the changing substance of aesthetic consciousness and practice and with the *productivity* of the aesthetic.

The limits of the field: Bourdieu's theory of cultural production

It is Bourdieu who has most thoroughly operationalised a sociological theory of cultural production, and it is by his efforts that the 'state of the art' can be assessed. His achievement with the theory of the field of cultural production is to have created an analytical scheme which gives due weight to the relational nature of the field and the competitive position-taking characteristic of actors engaged in cultural production, dynamics captured elegantly in the spatial metaphor of the field. The field, then, is a structured space of possible positions and trajectories, a social topology constituted through the competitive yet complementary position-taking of rival actors. Bourdieu highlights how such relational dynamics are evidenced at increasing levels of encompassment, not only between individual producers, but artistic genres and movements, cultural intermediaries (curators, dealers, impresarios, editors, critics, journalists), and cultural institutions (galleries, museums, publishing houses, concert organisations and so on).[32] Every artist, intermediary and institution necessarily defines their position and that of the genres or artworks that they advocate in terms of relations of difference or opposition to others within the field, while the field as a whole is 'governed by a specific logic: competition for cultural legitimacy'[33] - a logic that developed out of historical processes of increasing autonomisation and internal differentiation of the field.

There are two methodological gains here. First, steering between 'external' and 'internal' accounts, Bourdieu argues trenchantly when tracing wider social and historical determinations that they take effect only through their refraction by the properties of each specific field. Hence works of art are produced through the interaction between an artist's habitus (or

[28] Lash 1993, pp. 205-6.
[29] Osborne 1998, p. 16.
[30] Osborne 1998, p. 123.
[31] Osborne 1998, p. 107.
[32] Bourdieu 1971 (1967), 1968a, 1993, 1996 (1992).
[33] Bourdieu 1971 (1968), p. 163.

socialised disposition), which reflects her social origins and personal trajectory, and the field as a structured space of competing styles and genres, themselves resulting from the evolution of the field. Second, Bourdieu's insistent probing of the relational, of the 'consensus in dissensus, which constitutes the objective unity of the…field',[34] stands as an exemplary sociological implementation of the post-structuralist imperative to engage with the analysis of classification, boundaries and difference.[35]

However, if we look to Bourdieu to fill out a sociological aesthetics and to address the specificity of the art object, we look in vain. The most sustained consideration of the aesthetic comes in *Distinction*, his seminal study of consumption, in which he equates it with the high cultural tastes of the French bourgeoisie and reads it negatively as a mode of class domination.[36] *Distinction*, while rightly appreciated as a masterpiece of twentieth-century sociology, has been subject to numerous criticisms, both theoretical and methodological. A telling problem concerns the symmetry of his analysis of the aesthetics of consumption. For in contrast to his acute sociological deconstruction of the claims to transcendance of the Kantian aesthetic of the bourgeoisie, Bourdieu is ambiguous about the extent to which the popular aesthetic of the French working class should be understood primarily in terms of a class-determined lack (of education, knowledge of aesthetic codes and so on), or whether, given these inequalities, it should be grasped as equally embodying distinctive types of knowledge and practices of distinction as the bourgeois aesthetic – that is, should be granted its own positivity. It is as though when analysing working class sensibilities Bourdieu is persuaded by their apparent functionalism ('the opposite of bourgeois formalism')[37] to adopt an explanatory and condescending naturalism which abandons the social semiotic complexity that he himself has argued is immanent in the class structuring of taste. A corrective is provided by those writers from anthropology and cultural studies who offer a very different account of subaltern practices, examining the historical self-determination of the tastes of subaltern groups as they develop, commonly, via the appropriation of cultural materials from dominant others.[38]

If in *Distinction* Bourdieu's theorisation of the aesthetic takes a mainly negative form, it is quite marginal to his work on production. The fullest treatment is given in his account in *The Rules of Art* of the historical genesis of the autonomous subfield of cultural production, exemplified in the careers of Manet, Flaubert and Baudelaire, which he depicts as coeval with the emergence of the Kantian 'pure, disinterested gaze'. Bourdieu's aim is to historicise changing modes of artistic production, but the analytical palette taken to the historical material is relentlessly, clinically structuralist. Take this account of the 'double rupture' by which Flaubert and his like, responsible for inventing the figure of the modern writer and artist, established their artistic personae:

[34] Bourdieu 1967, p. 191.
[35] See also Bourdieu 1990a, p. 147.
[36] Bourdieu 1984 (original 1979), a position already set out in essence in Bourdieu 1968.
[37] Bourdieu 1984, p. 379.
[38] See Thomas 1991 who analyses the mutual 'entanglement' of Oceanic societies and colonisers, concluding that 'the histories of cultures in the Pacific Islands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been marked, above all, by [the] process of rendering local practice explicit through politicized juxtaposition to whatever is taken to be European.… Contemporary culture and sociality are constituted historically, locally, and wilfully' (p. 207). Analogously, Hebdige 1988 charts the meanings attributed to American consumer goods as they were embraced by the working class in inter- and post-war Britain in the face of contempt for 'Americanisation' among the intelligentsia. American popular culture, recontextualised, became at once a means of self-creation for the working class, and a battleground for class hostilities.

> The occupants of this contradictory position are destined to oppose…different established positions and hence to try to reconcile the irreconcilable, that is, the two opposed principles governing their double rejection. In opposition to 'useful art', the official and conservative variant of 'social art', of which Maxime Du Camp, a close friend of Flaubert's, was one of the most notorious defenders, and in opposition to bourgeois art, the consenting or unconscious vehicle of an ethical and political *doxa*, they call for ethical freedom, even prophetic provocation; they want above all to assert a distance from all institutions – the state, the Academie, journalism – but without recognising themselves for all that in the spontaneous carelessness of the bohemians, who also claim the values of independence but in order to legitimate either transgressions without properly aesthetic consequences or pure and simple regressions to the facile and the 'vulgar'.[39]

Note Bourdieu's reference to the 'properly aesthetic consequences' by which he charts the opposition between Flaubert's self-conception and the merely bohemian - a comment, however, which he typically never develops by articulating the content of Flaubert's aesthetics. Instead, substantive issues of form, style and artistic ideology are folded into an account of the differentiation and hierarchization of genres – a powerful analysis which could, but does not, lead him to a concern with the substantive.[40] Bourdieu insistently refuses to address the art object and its aesthetic properties, and to allow them to play a part in the unfolding analysis.

Thus, not only in *The Rules of Art*, but in the writings on cultural production that preceded it, history recedes from view and is transmuted into an account of the structural dynamics of the field, which, however, are modelled on Bourdieu's analysis of late nineteenth-century France. Indeed, having traced the genesis of the autonomous subfield, Bourdieu hypostasises his historical sociology: he derives from it and then generalises his structural analysis of the field. While there is value, as I have indicated, in Bourdieu's nuanced structuralism, the effect is to subsume the formative role of aesthetic traditions and particular art objects within an account of competitive, conflictual relations between actors. In this way any concern with the substantive meaning and power of particular aesthetic formations is evacuated in favour of a synchronic focus on the agonistics of position-taking.[41] Repeatedly, historical questions are translated by Bourdieu into his favoured topoi of 'protagonists' who pursue 'strategies' in order to wage 'struggles', 'confrontations', 'coups' and 'revolutions'.[42] Bourdieu's theory of cultural production therefore exemplifies the general problems raised by his scientific theory of social meaning, in which he invariably finds behind the appearance of meaningful practices human motivations amounting to the competitive accumulation of cultural and symbolic capital,[43] themselves predicated on a 'utilitarian framework'[44] of 'economic maximisation'.[45]

Further aspects of the theory of cultural production recapitulate difficulties in Bourdieu's larger theoretical project, issues that can be raised only briefly. The absence of a positive

[39] Bourdieu 1996, p. 77.
[40] Bourdieu 1996, pp. 114-121.
[41] In Bourdieu's (1990a, p. 144) words, 'the aesthetic concepts that a certain aesthetic theory forces itself to ground in reason,…and whose inconsistency, incoherence, or mere vagueness people have noted before me…are, paradoxically, necessary only if one sets them back in the purely sociological logic of the field in which they are generated and have functioned as symbolic strategies in struggles for symbolic domination'.
[42] This is exemplified in Bourdieu 1990a, from which these terms are drawn. Bennett 2005 locates these topoi in Darwinian metaphors of struggle and survival prevalent in the late 19th century literary and artistic fields from which Bourdieu derives his analysis.
[43] Dreyfus and Rabinow 1993.
[44] Honneth 1986, p. 65.
[45] Postone, LiPuma and Calhoun 1993, p. 8.

account of aesthetic traditions, their historical productivity and genealogical longevity, is underpinned by his general inability to theorise diachrony, transformation and change, stasis or stability in cultural history. Thus Craig Calhoun proposes that Bourdieu's theory is strong as a theory of reproduction, but 'at its weakest as a theory of transformation';[46] while Richard Jenkins comments that '[d]espite the significance which [Bourdieu] attaches to the temporality of practice, his theory becomes a machine for the suppression of history'.[47] Such difficulties are serious enough for any social theory. For accounts of cultural production they are particularly problematic; for it is only by theorising diachrony in cultural production that processes of stability and change can be grasped: the continuity of certain artistic codes or aesthetic formations, their evolution or bifurcation, subtle shifts or sudden ruptures in style or ideology – processes that lie, as art history attests, at the heart of artistic experience and that should be central to the explanatory program of the sociology of art.[48] This requires that attention be given to the influence on artists of these formations, artists' role in reproducing or transforming them - necessitating a theory of agency – and how as a result such formations are sustained, modulated, radically revised or attenuated. These issues can only be illuminated by a sociology that interrogates temporality and change, a challenge that requires a dialogue with art and cultural history and with theories of temporality.[49]

This problem links to another. Despite Bourdieu's injunction to address institutions when accounting for the dynamics of the field - a meso-level analysis mediating individual agency and broader historical forces – he gives only sporadic attention to the character of institutions, dwelling on their positioning in the field in a way that renders them analogous to individual actors.[50] His handling of institutions is exemplified by the analysis in 'The production of belief' of competitive position-taking in the field of the French press by newspapers like *France Soir* and *Le Nouvel Observateur* and in the literary field by rival publishers such as Robert Laffont and Edition Minuit. To be sure, his emphasis on the conflictual nature of social life advances on consensual conceptions of institutions; while the relational analysis illuminates aspects of the functioning of the institutions, offering insights into how bureaucracy, organisational style and ideology vary with scale. But for all the scintillating *aperçus*, Bourdieu adds little to our understanding of these institutions; in particular he does not pursue their historical effectivity in diffusing, consolidating or legitimising certain literary or artistic genres or discourses, or, conversely, in their banalisation or demise. If some writers claim that field theory paves the way for an investigation of 'institutional logics',[51] this may potentially be productive, but it extrapolates from Bourdieu's achievement.

A last set of difficulties, connected to the previous points, concerns agency and subjectivity, issues that Bourdieu addresses with his theory of practice. These issues are of critical importance in understanding cultural production, since explaining continuity or change in aesthetic systems requires not only a diachronic analysis attuned to historical specificity, but an account of agency as creative invention. It requires, that is to say, a historical analysis of when it is that agency, embodied in artistic practices and the resulting cultural objects, makes

[46] Calhoun 1993, pp. 66 and 72.
[47] Jenkins 1992, p. 97.
[48] See Ackerman 1962 on the importance of attending in the analysis of art history to the variety of articulations of the tension between stability and change in the dynamics of style.
[49] Bennett 2005 claims that Bourdieu gives an account of temporality in field theory, one that is 'unidirectional, progressive and cumulative' (p. 149). I question Bennett's interpretation, since what he details is a theory of extended reproduction. Later I offer an alternative approach to theorising temporality in cultural production.
[50] Jenkins 1992, pp. 84-91.
[51] Benson and Neveu 2005, pp. 11 and 12; Swartz 1997, pp. 119-121.

a difference by significantly and imaginatively intervening in a given aesthetic system, and when it does not. This in turn depends on conceptualising the range of forms of agency, so as to distinguish between its more trivial and more inventive modalities. Of course, the need to account for invention is not just a necessity when theorising cultural production; as recognised by social theorists from Gabriel Tarde onward, it is a general task for social theory.[52]

It is well known that Bourdieu set himself the task when constructing his theory of practice of overcoming the prevailing explanatory antinomies of subjectivism and objectivism, voluntarism and determinism, and mind and body. He proposes a theory of practice focused on the concept of habitus, a 'generative structuralism' analogous to Chomsky's generative grammar, with which he integrates post-Austinian theories of performativity and the phenomenological concern with embodiment.[53] For Bourdieu habitus is pre-linguistic and non-discursive; it is embodied in individual actors, but it is also a collective and social phenomenon. He repeatedly stresses the enduring, unreflective, 'unconscious' nature of habitus and its inscription in gesture and deportment – in bodily hexis.[54] What Bourdieu offers, in the terms of Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, is primarily an account of the iterative dimension of human agency, one that grants a 'central role to the notion of habit, understood as an active and creative relation to the world'.[55] This is plain when he considers collective agency, which he portrays as arising from conjunctural historical circumstances. Thus, 'the conjuncture capable of transforming practices…into *collective action*…is constituted in the dialectical relationship between, on the one hand, a habitus…and [on the other] an *objective event* which exerts its action of conditional stimulation calling for or demanding a determinate response'.[56]

It is in relation to individual agency, and through the notion of improvisation, that Bourdieu appears to conceptualise the creative, transformative aspect of agency. In this individual sense, rather than rule-following, habitus is conceived as a generative principle of regulated improvisations and practice as strategic and improvisatory. Agency is understood to result from the improvisatory nature of practice as it is informed by the habitus and meets the conditions of the field. It follows that a fundamental question concerns the status of the improvisatory valency of practice, since this alone rescues his framework from an overly determinist cast. Yet despite its critical role in his theory of practice, Bourdieu does not elaborate on his concept of improvisation, with the result that it amounts to a residual term, one that is quite unequal to the task of elucidating the transformative dimension of agency as it is thrown up at the interface of habitus, practice and conditions. In James Bohman's words, Bourdieu provides a weak account of reflexive agency, failing to explain 'how it is that

[52] Tarde 2001, and for a recent discussion, Emirbayer and Mische 1998.
[53] Bourdieu (1990b, p. 53) defines habitus as a 'system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends'.
[54] Swartz 1997, pp. 100-101. I place inverted commas around 'unconscious' since Bourdieu's use of the term does not follow established uses derived from psychoanalytic theories.
[55] Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 122, quoted in Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 978. Swartz 1997 (pp. 101-2) notes that Bourdieu first formulated the concept of habitus when translating a study by Panofsky on the influence of scholasticism on gothic architecture, a work concerned with resolute continuities: how the implicit cultural assumptions and explicit doctrines of scholasticism caused 'tacit "mental habits" [that were] transmitted by institutions, practices and social relations but functioned also as a "habit-forming force" that generated schemes of thought and action'.
[56] Bourdieu 1977, pp. 82-3 (emphases in the original), quoted in Calhoun 1993, p. 75.

innovation [and] new forms of expression…are possible'.[57] Bourdieu's theory of agency therefore privileges the iterative over the transformative; what is crucially missing is an explanation of 'how [the] schemas [of the habitus] can be challenged, reconsidered and reformulated'.[58] If such an absence weakens his social theory, it is a yawning gap in his theory of cultural production, for any analysis of creative practice that does not address the variable forms of invention and the diachronic vagaries of artistic systems and aesthetic formations fails to capture the defining historical processes that constitute this specialised domain.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus can be faulted, finally, for an unpersuasive account of subjectivity which fails to probe its complexities, one that is immune to recent developments in theorising the subject. Indeed in his scheme there appears to be no space for subjectivity, which is portrayed as unitary and as filled up by the dispositions of the habitus. There is little conception of subjectivity as contradictory and dynamic, of its constitution by competing subject positions, or of intrapsychic mechanisms impacting on social functioning. Henrietta Moore, amending Bourdieu's scheme, argues for the existence of intrasubjective contradictions and locates them in the multiple subject positions that inhere in any individual;[59] while Judith Butler uses psychoanalytic theory to question Bourdieu's account of the inclination to submit to the normative order with reference to the 'necessary ambivalence' at work in such a process.[60] In my research, in dialogue with Bourdieu, I bring theories of subject positioning and psychoanalytic object relations theory to bear on conceptualising individual and collective agency. With reference to ethnographic material I argue that cultural systems can embody psychic defence mechanisms such as splitting and denial, and that subjectivity can be grasped as formed through the interplay, in given historical conditions, between individual psychic history and collective defence mechanisms.[61] By 'socialising' our conception of psychic processes my intention is to permit a close reading of the interplay between individual subjectivity and collective processes in the analysis of ethnographic and historical material, notably authorial subjectivities.[62] Attending to agency, I suggest that 'both social positioning and individual psychic history will influence an individual's susceptibility to collective defences; and together these may work to produce a capacity for resistance and change, or not'.[63] This is a long way from Bourdieu's opaque notion of the habitus. To end this discussion of Bourdieu, I emphasise that there is great value in aspects of his theory of cultural production, but the difficulties now work to impede further progress.

Mediation, ontology, materiality, and genre: Contributions from anthropology

More fruitful in opening new avenues for thought are anthropological perspectives on cultural production. Compared with sociology, anthropology has been more ambitious in its substantive studies of art, music and media practices, benefiting from its cross-cultural orientation, and yet more fragmentary in its theoretical response. The anthropology of art

[57] Bohman 1999, p. 142.
[58] Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 983.
[59] Moore 1993.
[60] In Butler's (1999, p. 118) words, '[T]he mimetic acquisition of a norm is at once the condition by which a certain resistance to the norm is also produced…. But because for Bourdieu practical mimeticism works almost always to produce a conformity or congruence between the field and the habitus, the question of ambivalence at the core of practical mimeticism – and, hence, also in the very *formation* of the subject – is left unaddressed' (emphasis in the original).
[61] Born 1998.
[62] See Born 1997 and Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000 for an exposition of this theoretical framework for the analysis of authorial subjectivities, with reference to ethnographic and cultural-historical material.
[63] Born 1997, p. 497.

entails a quite different sensibility to the sociology of art. Sympathetic to the groups that it studies, it is invariably engaged in advocating their creative salience, a creativity that is commonly perceived to be linked to the promotion of a heightened sense of communality or social consciousness.[64] It proposes that art must be understood in the terms of the 'producing society', and that matters of aesthetic and affective experience, as well as 'form and the relative autonomy of form', lie within its scope.[65] It is no doubt anthropology's intense empirical engagement with its objects that has led to the acknowledgment of form and aesthetics as central problematics; and despite continuing controversy about whether the aesthetic can legitimately be employed cross-culturally as an analytical category,[66] much work in this area has been concerned with charting indigenous art systems and aesthetic discourses in all their subtlety and difference from Western romantic and modernist idioms. It is an artefact of ethnographic method that anthropologists have to engage with whatever creative practices are to be found among the groups that they study – whether they involve the visual or object arts, music, poetry, body art, dance or electronic media – thereby engendering a comparative frame across the discipline. Anthropology has therefore been sensitive to the shifting categories of art, creativity and aesthetics and the need to probe them comparatively.[67] Moreover, anthropological studies have been alert to historical particularity; with the rapid changes in recent decades in the networks of patronage and exchange through which indigenous art circulates and in the technologies of cultural production, anthropologists have portrayed their subjects in the midst of fast-moving historical circumstances.[68] Yet if anthropology has produced nuanced descriptions of the expressive practices of non-Western groups, studies that provide rich conceptual pickings, it has been defined primarily by its objects and by an ethical stance; it has resisted theoretical consolidation. Nonetheless, a number of writers proffer significant theoretical innovations, and in what follows I assist in that consolidation by drawing out three such directions in contemporary anthropology.

The first, evident in the work of Alfred Gell, Daniel Miller and Christopher Pinney, focuses on the cultural object and the forms of mediation through which it is constituted and which in turn it inaugurates. These writers vigorously contest the continuing resort in sociology and anthropology to the sterile trope of studying art in its social or historical 'context', a trope that instates a split between what are often untheorised external forces and the internal, undisturbed nature of the cultural object.[69] A more promising approach, exemplified by Gell, moves away from the unbridgeable chasms of subject and object, object and context, by focusing on art's material, social and temporal mediation, pointing in this way to a conception of the cultural object as an assemblage of such mediations.[70] In his book *Art and Agency* Gell argues with reference to a varied range of art forms – from Polynesian and Melanesian

[64] Weiner (2001, pp. 16-18, p. 28) suggests that this reveals an 'Anthropological Romanticism' immanent in the discipline.
[65] Morphy and Perkins 2006, p. 18.
[66] See the debate over the proposition 'Aesthetics is a cross-cultural category' in Ingold (ed.) 1996. The debate attests to a continuing conceptual confusion in moving between, on the one hand, a recognition of the historical specificity of Kantian aesthetic discourses and, on the other, the proposition that the aesthetic can be employed as an analytical category that alerts researchers to questions of the existence or not and the nature of discourses concerning form, sensory experience, pleasure and value as they mediate both cultural production and reception.
[67] Morphy and Perkins 2006, p. 15 and p. 18.
[68] Notable studies of this kind include Steiner 1994 and Marcus and Myers 1995.
[69] For a critique of notions of 'context' with reference to the obdurately disjunctive material properties of objects, which exert a 'torque' on history and culture, see Pinney 2005, especially pp. 268-270; and for a more general critique of 'context', Miller 2005.
[70] On the analysis of music in terms of the assemblage as a constellation of mediations, see Born 2005b. On the notion of the assemblage, see Rabinow 2003, chapter 3, and Deleuze 1988 on Foucault.

carving, tattooing, fetishes and other sculptures, to Western painting and visual arts – that all cultural production constructs relations not only between persons, but between persons and things, and that it does so across both space and time. He defines his theory against two extant approaches: on the one hand, he advocates a 'methodological philistinism' against cross-cultural aesthetics and semantic theories of art; on the other, he rejects sociological approaches that focus on art's institutionalisation. In contrast, he proposes that anthropology's proper depth of focus is 'biographical', its realm of enquiry the microsocial: art's embeddedness in immediate social relations, its role in construing networks of exchange.[71] Gell's theory centers on the idea that the cultural objects (or 'indexes') that result from creative agency condense and mediate the social relations entailed in their production, and that they do so by spinning forms of connectedness across space and time. Through the circulation of these objects the social relations are distributed both spatially and temporally, and in the process the social relations are transformed, as are the objects themselves. The cultural object has a kind of career: it changes not only via its interpretation in performance and reception, but it can change in its very physical form. Gell suggests an analytical ontology not of persons and things, subject and object, but one that, recalling the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead, insists on the relational nature of these very terms.[72]

Gell addresses also the temporal dimensions of art. Here he draws on Husserl's model of time-consciousness, in which the same event is modified when apprehended from the point of view of present, past or future, and in which past and future are continually altering in cognitive time. Central to this dynamic experience of time is the existence of retentions (memories or traces of the past) and protentions (projections or anticipations); the past is always experienced through a retention of previous events – a construct of the present – just as the future is experienced as a protention of possible eventualities – also a present construct. Both constructs, of past and future, alter dynamically as the present evolves through the shifting relations between prehending subject and prehended object.[73] Gell takes this Husserlian perspective to the relations between works in any artist's oeuvre, tracing how later works are anticipated in earlier ones, and how retentions of earlier works are found in later ones.[74] He illustrates with reference to Marcel Duchamp's work from 1913 on, proposing that it forms 'a distributed object, in that each of Duchamp's separate works is a preparation for, or a development of, other works of his, and all may be traced, by direct or circuitous pathways, to all the others'.[75] But he argues that the model works also for a collective corpus of works, or for styles (or genres) over time that integrate particular instances of creativity into a higher-order unity. The artefacts in such a network are not 'symbols' of another agency, but themselves exercise a kind of agency. He takes the corpus of Maori meeting houses built between 1870 and 1930 as a collective instance of such object agency, suggesting that this oeuvre represents a composite object distributed in time and space. An oeuvre (or genre), Gell concludes, is an object distributed in space and time, where the relations between individual artworks map out a web of retentions and protentions.

[71] Gell 1998, chapter 1.
[72] Whitehead 1978.
[73] I borrow the terms prehending subject and prehended object from Whitehead 1978, chapter 2.
[74] Gell 1998, chapter 9.
[75] Gell op. cit., p. 245.

This is a fecund approach, and its influence is spreading across a number of fields, from archaeology and art history to literary and music studies.[76] Yet its limitations should also be acknowledged. First, we might note Gell's resilient humanism: despite his attempt to incorporate the agency of things, with his stress on 'biographical' scale and insistence on the 'nature of the art object [as a] function of the social-relational matrix in which it is embedded',[77] he tends paradoxically to reinscribe conceptual dualisms between subject and object and between the problematic of Western and non-Western art. This is evident also in the way that he valorizes cultural objects primarily by reference to their extrinsic social functions – a propensity that Miller traces to the neo-Durkheimian strand in British social anthropology and its tendency to reify and sacralize social relations.[78] In this way Gell resurrects an anthropological version of the sociological reductionism that he himself disowns, effectively putting off limits a fuller engagement with the specifically aesthetic qualities of cultural objects. Moreover, Gell hampers his framework by disconnecting it from the analysis of wider historical processes – social, political, economic, discursive or material – as well as from other orders of temporality in art, beyond the Husserlian dynamics. Yet his own material repeatedly demands a rapprochement with history and sociology, whether to address the 'semantics' of artistic agency in any particular culture or era in relation to larger aesthetic movements – for example, Duchamp's orientation with reference to Cubism[79] – or the politics of the art object – as raised, for example, by his account of the 'Slashed Rokeby Venus', an object resulting from early twentieth-century feminist politics's invasion of the National Gallery.[80] A final limit is that Gell's scheme neglects questions of ontology, while at the same time highlighting the way that research on cultural production necessarily exists at the interface of two levels of ontology: not only the ontology of the analyst, which Gell imaginatively revises, but the ontology of the object.[81]

The second innovative direction in contemporary anthropology follows directly on, by addressing the ontology of the object. It is exemplified in the work of media anthropologist Eric Michaels, ethnomusicologist Steven Feld and anthropologists of art Fred Myers and Nicholas Thomas. All of these writers move beyond the analysis of indigenous aesthetics and expressive practices by contending that this must be set within an account of the ontology in which they are embedded. Michaels' account of the Warlpiri people's 'Aboriginal invention of television' in Central Australia in the mid 1980s remains unsurpassed in media studies in testifying to the repressed truth that a medium as globally standardized as television can support radically different aesthetics, as it does in the Warlpiri's television productions, intended as they are to embody cultural self-determination and self-representation.[82] As Michaels puts it, 'The problem that video and television posed [for Warlpiri] was how to discover means of bringing this new medium "inside the Law" [or the Dreamtime, the body of oral tradition]'.[83] Narrating the creation of the film *Coniston Story*, a recounting of a traumatic and violent retribution visited by white Europeans on the Warlpiri in 1929, Michaels sets the film-making within an analysis of Warlpiri ontology. He stresses not only that the practice of

[76] See Pinney and Thomas 2001, Born 2005b on music, and the papers given at the conference 'Art and Agency' Ten Years On, Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Cambridge, November 2008: http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/events/545/.
[77] Gell 1998, p. 7REF XX.
[78] Miller 2005, p. 36.
[79] Gell 1998, pp. 242-51.
[80] Gell 1998, pp. 62-5.
[81] See Born 2005b for a more developed discussion of the relevance of Gell's theory of art and agency to music.
[82] Michaels 1994, especially chapter 6.
[83] Michaels 1994, p. 108.

filming was infused with Warlpiri cosmology and kinship relations, but that the filmic aesthetic was startingly unique: 'the pans do not follow the movement of the eye, but movements of unseen characters – both of the Dreamtime and historical – which converge on this landscape…. Shifts in focus and interruptions in panning pick out important places and things in the landscape, like a tree where spirits live or a flower with symbolic value'.[84] That is, the very sense of visual field and filmic time employed are suffused with Warlpiri cosmology. Feld's account of the poetics and aesthetics of the musical forms of the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea similarly insists on the embeddedness of Kaluli aesthetics, centred on the metaphor *dulugu ganalan* or 'lift-up-over sounding', in their social ontology, itself inseparable from an ecological cosmology elaborated around their rainforest environment. Thus the aesthetic quality of 'lift-up-over sounding' is manifest not only in dense, layered sounds that are 'in synchrony while out of phase', but in the Kaluli social ideal of cooperative and collaborative autonomy, an 'anarchistic synchrony' that encompasses changing degrees of difference and displacement.[85]

Taking this a step further, Myers and Thomas address situations of intercultural contact in order to probe the uneasy encounter between different ontologies or 'regimes of value'. Myers pursues 'the trajectory of local theories of materiality as indigenous Australian paintings and designs move through the Western art-culture system and the Western concept of property and as different object-ideologies meet'.[86] In the ontology of the Aboriginal peoples of Central Australia, 'the revelation of ancestral knowledge and events in material form, such as painting, ritual or song, is colloquially known as "the Dreaming"'. Landscape is a manifestation of the Dreaming, and the right to reveal a ceremony is 'in the hands of those we might call the "owners" of that country and its associated Dreaming stories'. Painted images remain always a part, an embodiment, of 'those who are custodians of …the Dreaming itself, which is the identity ground of the painters'.[87] In this regime of value the overriding obligation felt by painters is to limit the dispersal of manifestations of ancestral knowledge and control who can witness them, a kin-based obligation organized both territorially and inter-generationally. Myers draws attention to the disjunctures between this regime, in which images are not considered to be the property of artist-individuals, and the commodity regime of the international art market with its discourse of individual creativity and regulatory norms of cultural property that are instantiated in economic practices and legal codes. As Myers concludes, 'the entry of indigenous painting into the system of fine art [was] supposed to be accompanied by an emptying or subordination of political and ethnic value to those of a transcendental or formal aesthetics. This subordination is not, however, complete, and what actually prevails is a contestation over the hierarchical organization of the values adhering to these objects'.[88]

Because of the focus on discerning the distinctive ontologies that inform expressive practices, the thrust of these anthropological studies may appear simply to be relativising. But in highlighting the need for an understanding of ontologies as the basis for an analysis of such practices, their social, discursive, aesthetic and material operations, these writers bring a

[84] Michaels 1994, pp. 113 and 115.
[85] Feld 1994, pp. 119 and 122.
[86] Myers 2006, pp. 89.
[87] Myers 2006, pp. 95-6.
[88] Myers 2006, pp. 97-8.

critical new methodological framing to the theorization of cultural production, one that has as yet received scant sociological attention.[89]

A third innovative direction, building on the previous two, is evident in Pinney's archaeology of the 'social life of Indian photographs' in which, utilizing ethnography and history, he charts the changing ecology of photographic portraiture in the everyday lives of the towns and villages of the sub-continent since its arrival in the 1840s.[90] Here the contribution is to add a diachronic concern with genre and the genealogy of aesthetic practices as these are modulated by the evolving materiality of photographic media in particular cultural circumstances. Pinney moves adroitly when analyzing the early decades between the colonial state's mobilization of photography for its taxonomic inventories of tribes and castes, an anxious usage preoccupied with reading 'external [physical] signs as signifiers of collective behaviour',[91] and the parallel growth of a visual culture of elite Indian portraiture in which 'markers of ethnicity were downplayed' and which mimicked prevailing European aesthetic norms.[92] In each phase of his genealogy Pinney probes the specificity of the photographic practices, analyzing their aesthetic and formal characteristics. He is alert to the differentiation of photographic genres, in the later 19th century mapping the bifurcation between a '"salvage" paradigm…applied to what were perceived to be fragile tribal communities', with its anonymous, primitivist aesthetic, and a '"detective" paradigm' which presumed 'the continuing vitality' of those groups depicted and the utility of such anthropological observations as 'future identificatory guides' to segments of the colonial labour force.[93]

Pinney attends equally to the materiality of photographic processes in each era and what they afforded photographers in terms of aesthetic and semantic potentials. He reads closely, for example, the sophisticated montage techniques employed in wedding photography by the renowned Suhag studio of Nagda, the central Indian industrial town where he did fieldwork. Here, 'carefully cut card templates [were used] to mask the photographic paper during printing, [so that] a full-face portrait of the bride…is interpolated into a profile of the groom and both these images are encompassed by a large shadow profile of the groom. The montage…plays upon the nature of representation, for the encompassing shadow also refers to the literary Hindi term for photograph – *chhayachitra* (shadow picture)'.[94] Pinney's analysis is exemplary, finally, in tracing the cross-currents between photography and other cultural and discursive regimes which provided its ontological grounding, principal among them Hindi cosmologies. Thus, stressing that 'it is cultural familiarity that establishes the horizons of reality and plausibility' of photography and film,[95] Pinney examines the substance of the Hindi classical and vernacular narratives in circulation, as well as the dense webs of 'inter-ocular' reference spanning the varieties of Indian popular visual culture over the last century within which photography established its codes and 'does its work'.[96]

[89] One discipline in which the role of ontology in cultural production has begun to be raised is musicology, exemplified by Goehr 1992. See Born 2005b for an attempt to develop a comparative analysis of ontologies of music, in particular through a comparison of Western art music and jazz and digitised musics.
[90] Pinney 1997, p. 8. The reference is to Appadurai 1986.
[91] Pinney 1997, p. 44.
[92] Pinney 1997, p. 97.
[93] Pinney 1997, p. 45.
[94] Pinney 1997, p. 118.
[95] Pinney 1997, p. 190.
[96] Pinney 1997, pp. 189-95.

Compared to the sociology of art, and with reference to the five themes signaled at the outset, the startlingly different methodological and theoretical orientation of this recent body of anthropological work can now be discerned. First, these writers address the specificity of the aesthetic, interrogating both how it infuses expressive practices and how it is discursively constituted. The exception is Gell, to whom, however, James Weiner offers a persuasive riposte. As Weiner argues, 'We can easily jettison a consideration of autonomous or discrete artistic meaning…without throwing out the bath water of aesthetics or language or signs.… We don't have to decide what beauty is in the realm of the artistic, but we do have to confront the manifest ways with which a social entity produces conventions of all sorts for itself'.[97] In the main, these anthropologists pursue questions of history and temporality; if Gell's Husserlian perspective on temporality is suggestive, Pinney and Thomas reconnect 'biographical' time with larger cultural- and social-historical processes. Pinney, in particular, takes seriously the need to trace the temporal depth and unfolding of the genres and aesthetic lineages that he recounts. Avoiding teleology, he grants these lineages an appropriate autonomy in terms of their formal and discursive dynamics and internal differentiation, as well as their inter-textual and inter-medial negotiations with co-existent cultural practices and discursive currents. Pinney, Myers and Thomas also examine the institutional nexus within which the cultural productions that they analyse take place. Moreover, a number of these writers highlight transformative agency: Michaels charts the catalyzing intervention of filmmaker Francis Jupurrurla in the invention of Warlpiri television production, while Pinney acknowledges the photographers and studios that play a salient part in his genealogies. In addition, most address the materiality of cultural objects with reference to their obdurate 'thing-ness', and to their varying ontological status: as Miller puts it, how they construe 'our sense of ourselves as subjects… how the things that people make, make people'.[98]

A last sense in which this anthropological work is evocative concerns value and judgement. In marked contrast to Gell, there is an understated sense in the writings of Feld, Michaels, Myers and Pinney in which the exegesis of the object is so roundly elaborated, including aesthetic qualities and their historical conditions, that it envisages or elicits cultural criticism. Questions of value, that is to say, are not foreclosed.

Problematisation and the formative role of the aesthetic

What can be taken from this discussion? In the second half I want to turn to my research and indicate how, by tackling the five themes threaded through this article, it offers a way forward, in particular by providing a non-reductive account of the aesthetic and of the temporalities immanent in cultural production. In this way it responds also to classic problems in art and cultural history concerning the analysis of style and genre. It will become apparent that my work both parallels and expands upon the anthropological contributions that I have detailed, with reference to a range of Western cultural and media practices. I suggested earlier that central to theorising cultural production should be a positive account of aesthetic formations, attentive to their productivity and genealogical longevity as well as to artists' role in reproducing or transforming them. I argued that understanding continuity or change in aesthetic systems necessitates a diachronic analysis attuned to historical specificity as well as an account of agency as creative invention. To be non-reductive such an account must take on the formative historical power of such aesthetic systems, their substantive artistic significance,

[97] Weiner 2001, p. 16.
[98] Miller 2005, both quotations p. 38.

coherence and differentiation; and this must be reconnected to an analysis of the interrelations between such formative systems and other social, political and economic dynamics.[99]

I stated at the outset that my ethnographies, *Rationalizing Culture* (of IRCAM) and *Uncertain Vision* (of the BBC), attempt to accomplish several linked goals: to provide a substantively rich account of what are reflexive creative and intellectual cultures,[100] as well as to analyse the conditions for creativity that prevail in the two institutions, the causalities that underpin these conditions, and the results of these processes in terms of the cultural output. The approach combines three elements: first, an institutional ethnography set within an analysis of the wider fields of cultural production in which each operates - respectively, musical modernism and computer music, and the broadcasting industry. Second, through a combination of ethnography and history, both studies probe the discursive, aesthetic, political and economic dynamics, broadly, that inform the present; that is, I trace how such historical dynamics are mediated by the institution and its charismatic leaders (Pierre Boulez, John Birt), and how in turn the resulting institutional conditions influence what is made. Third, on the basis of the ethnography and history, each study develops a critical interpretation of the cultural object in question: IRCAM's music, and the BBC's television output (focused on particular genres, notably television drama, documentary, news and current affairs).

To summarise the substance of the two works: the IRCAM ethnography examines the hybrid practices and knowledges developed through collaborations between musicians and computer scientists. It charts the rationalisation of the post-serialist musical avant-garde: through the recourse to science and technology as the means of renewing composition; through its institutionalisation in an extended division of labour; and through the policing of the aesthetics permitted at IRCAM and the externalisation and denial of alternative musics, technologies and philosophies. By erecting strong boundaries, the IRCAM administration attempted strenuously to control the music that was made and to prolong or protend the Boulezian aesthetic. The BBC study, in contrast, probes the effects of neo-liberal policies on the corporation, in particular Director-General Birt's strenuous implementation of the 'new public management' through the introduction of marketization and market research, outsourcing, auditing and accountability practices – techniques intended to boost efficiency and increase the BBC's democratic functioning by effecting greater responsiveness to its audiences. The ironic findings are that these and other forces acted to inhibit creativity and erode the space for autonomy in program-making, in part through extreme centralisation and by foregrounding generic values such as efficiency and value for money that displaced the creative idioms of program-making.

Why undertake institutional ethnographies of cultural production? The answer takes us from the specific to the general. Specifically, both IRCAM, founded by Pierre Boulez in the late 1970s and the leading international centre for computer music research and development, and the BBC, for eighty years the model for public service broadcasters around the world, are national in their formation, international in their operations, and global in their ambitions. Both are exemplary institutions in their fields; both fields incorporate a set of rival institutions, and in both fields creative labour has largely been institutionalised. They were therefore chosen as the foci for my ethnographies as *symptomatic* institutions: sites in which are condensed the particular problematic to be examined - whether the crisis of 'serious'

[99] For a discussion of the methodological importance of these two dimensions of analysis, see Kane's 1991 distinction between the 'analytical' and 'concrete' aspects of the autonomy of culture.
[100] Born 2000, Maurer 2005.

musical composition in the twentieth century, for which Boulez envisaged IRCAM as the solution, or that of public service broadcasting, widely perceived to be facing terminal decline. The driving motive of both studies, then, is emphatically historical: each responds to and problematises a critical cultural historical moment in the respective cultural field.[101]

In addition, generally, because of their scale and scope and the heavy investment of resources that they demand, institutions intervene influentially in the history of the fields that they inhabit, having often inertial effects on their reproduction, and yet also acting as the site of emergence, expression and magnification of crises or transformations within those fields. Institutions amount to a kind of sociological petri dish for the analysis of what Paul Rabinow, drawing on Dewey and Foucault, calls problematization. For Foucault, for problematization to occur, something 'must have happened to introduce uncertainty, a loss of familiarity; that loss, that uncertainty is the result of difficulties in our previous way of understanding'.[102] Rabinow continues that this optic involves a 'particular style of inquiry' a 'modal change from seeing a situation not only as "a given" but equally as "a question"', which he links to Foucault's stress on the 'multiple constraints at work in any historically troubled situation'.[103] Problematization implies for Rabinow that social research should engage with 'broad historical problem-formations' and aspire to 'successive articulations of problems, their failure, displacement and re-articulation'.[104] Taking concrete institutions (IRCAM, the BBC) in relation to their respective cultural fields as the focus of a problematization therefore works well, for such organisations have both substantive and symptomatic historical significance, but it is worth noting that they could be substituted in this function by a network or indeed a cultural field.[105]

Institutions, due to their scale and scope, also have the interesting property of condensing complexity: they encompass a population that is constituted not only by the mundane uniformities of professional and corporate identification, but by differences – of status and authority, power and resources, of worldview, culture and aesthetic orientation. Ethnographies of cultural institutions offer an analytical meso-level, a meeting point of history and contemporary practice, a two-way lens located at the juncture of two analytical movements: reading in and reading out. Reading in, the ethnography enables an analysis not only of organisational conditions, but of the social relations of production, the nature of creative practice, and the authorial subjectivities of those involved. By analysing such institutions in the terms of hierarchy and stratification, social and cultural difference and division, much can be gleaned about the particular art worlds and the conditions for creativity that inhere within them. In this way we learn that IRCAM music is embedded in a highly stratified and gendered division of labour; while the BBC is a microcosm of social class in Britain, exhibits institutional racism and, through casualisation of employment, has aborted the ethical identification of its workforce. Analysing the social relations mediating the cultural object contributes to a sociological hermeneutics, then, in several ways. Most obviously, they condition what gets made. In addition, such an analysis makes us conscious of the social relations immanent in our experience of art, music and media, an insight that supplements our

[101] It is this commitment to historical problematisation that distinguishes the approach advocated here from the new institutionalism in its various guises.
[102] Foucault 1994, p. 598, quoted in Rabinow 2005, p. 43.
[103] Rabinow 2005, all p. 44.
[104] Rabinow 2005, p. 51.
[105] It might be imagined that the difference between an ethnographic focus on an institution and a cultural field or network implies a shift from orthodox ethnographic fieldwork to multi-site ethnography (Marcus 1991); but the difference can be overdrawn, since the former fieldwork also entails multiple sites, suggesting that fieldwork today should be understood as inhabiting a spectrum in terms of being more or less multiple and dispersed.

understanding of cultural production without ruling out other kinds of knowledge and judgement. Moreover in the performance arts, both the social relations and the manifest socialities of performance mediate and form part of aesthetic experience, with both positive and negative valencies.

Cultural institutions constitute a social microcosm through which is accomplished not only the cultural production at issue, but which embodies metonymically the aesthetic discourses and controversies that surround any creative practice. In ethnographic fieldwork these discourses can be investigated both by eliciting producers' exegeses about their creative work, and by elucidating the wider critical discourses that attach to the cultural object. Ethnography therefore affords an analysis of aesthetic and ideological differences within and without the institution as they refract historical aesthetic formations – an analysis that in turn provides the basis for interrogating both authorial subjectivity and the nature of the cultural object. Within IRCAM a dominant Boulezian modernism was overtly (if ineffectively) contested by a postmodern aesthetic and philosophy espoused by younger composers, while commercial popular musics were entirely repressed, glimpsed only at the margins. In short, IRCAM's legitimation, its historical self-consistency, was predicated on the construction and policing of absolute aesthetic boundaries - essentially, on keeping out popular and, less fiercely, postmodern musics. Such an uneasy discursive settlement can be traced also in the configuration of individual subjectivities. It suggests the need to investigate authorial subjectivity on three planes: locating individuals' aesthetic and ethical positioning in relation to the institution's norms, to broader historical discourses, and subsequently reading their self-narratives and practices for what they tell concerning the intrapsychic processes at work in these discourses. To illustrate: IRCAM composers exhibited a range of mechanisms through which they attempted to conform to IRCAM's aesthetic injunctions, including the tacit imperative to absent other kinds of (popular and postmodern) musics. With reference to dramatic ethnographic data, I employ psychoanalytic concepts of splitting and denial together with theories of the subject to understand such musical subjectivities as far from fixed and unitary, but as composed of multiple, sometimes contradictory musical identities. This kind of ethnographic material, also available from biography, makes it possible to move beyond the impasses of the deconstruction of authorship and subtly to retheorise authorial agency: a task that is overdue, and one that illuminates how the fractured contours of twentieth century culture impact intrasubjectively.[106]

One of the primary aims of the ethnographies is to combine sociological analysis of the institution with interpretation of the cultural object: to move from the analysis of production conditions, of genre conventions, of the subjectivities and intentionalities of producers, to the resulting cultural objects. Thus, while *Rationalizing Culture* critically probes the aesthetic contours of IRCAM music, *Uncertain Vision* offers readings of the programs and genres issuing from the television departments that I observed. This comes to the heart of the injunction to acknowledge the specialisation of modern culture and interrogate historical specificity. In both ethnographies I chart for each genre the aesthetic and ethical discourses that inform creative practice, their histories and controversies; I trace also the nature of contemporary critical discourses. To understand producers' creative projects and judgements, then, in whichever medium or genre – whether musical modernism or British television drama - it is not enough to analyse institutional conditions. It is also necessary to trace both diachronically and horizontally the evolving aesthetics and ethics - those formations embodied

[106] See Born 1995, 1997; and, for a fuller methodological treatment of the analysis of the musical subjectivities of twentieth-century composers, Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000.

in theories, techniques and codes that Foucault argues bear the 'positivity of a knowledge' - that characterise any field of creative practice, that provide the preconditions not only for repetition but for difference and invention within and across genres, and that are profoundly historical. If there is an overriding dimension of creative practice that has been lamentably neglected - by Bourdieu, production of culture and cultural studies alike – and that demands to be studied, it is the insistent, existential reality of the historical orientation of producers by reference to the aesthetic and ethical trajectories or coordinates of the genres in which they work, an orientation that *enables or affords agency*. Here fertile use can be made of Jauss's emphasis in his theory of reception aesthetics, in turn influenced by Gadamer, on the mediated nature and the historicity of interpretation, and therefore the necessity of literary criticism basing its perspectives and standards on a 'reconstruction of the horizon of expectations, in the face of which a work was created and received in the past'.[107] My interest is not only in Jauss's account of criticism; it is also in how his method can illuminate the production aesthetics immanent in the cultural object, against any 'author or production oriented essentialism',[108] by attending to the nexus of prevailing aesthetic and formal conventions and norms – the horizon or 'foreknowledge' – against which it was conceived and created. This is a reading that Jauss encourages when he draws a parallel between the 'process of reception [as] the expansion of a semiotic system that accomplishes itself between the development and the correction of a system' and the idea that 'a corresponding process of the continuous establishing and altering of horizons also determines the relationship of the individual text to the succession of texts that form a genre'.[109] This process of genre-in-formation, of the interplay between object and genre, is one in which any object is potentially performative in as much as it may protend, as Gell tells us oxymoronically, the future history of the genre.[110]

It is only on such an historical understanding that a sociological hermeneutics can be founded. That is to say, only against the background of an analysis of the history of a genre-in-process – of a Gellian distributed object - is it possible to assess the degree of inventiveness or redundancy of the cultural object in question. In relation to mass media, only such an analysis can refute the denial on the part of Adornian criticism of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of, and the evolution of materials in, mass media products. I show in *Uncertain Vision*, for example, how Birtism and New Labour policies encountered in the body of the BBC the historical ethos of public service broadcasting manifest in the distinctive lineages of genre-specific professional cultures, with their aesthetic and ethical commitments, which in turn put up varying degrees of resistance to the onerous conditions wrought by the managerial reforms. Indeed the television producers, journalists and channel schedulers that I observed in the BBC were fully possessed of a reflexive and knowing relation not only to the genres and fields in which they operate, but to their imagined audiences and to the potential social and cultural effects of their output. They are best portrayed as a species of media intellectual.[111]

However, if as a result of those reforms the BBC's television output became as a whole more populist in orientation, more imitative of the commercial environment, less able to support instances of risk and diversity of generic address, the deleterious institutional conditions had different effects on different genres. It is at this stage that to explain the differential impacts, it becomes necessary to move 'inside' each genre. The analytical point is that the trajectory of

[107] Jauss 1982, p. 28, citing Gadamer 1975.
[108] De Man 1982, pp. xv.
[109] Jauss 1982, p. 23.
[110] De Man 1982, p. xiv; Gell 1998.
[111] Born 2000.

the aesthetic and formal conventions that characterise any genre at a particular historical moment can be either propitious and generative, or unpropitious and in decline. Such a trajectory is never fully determinant, but it provides the aesthetic conditions – the horizon - within which creative practice is conceived, and from which it departs.

To illustrate: BBC television drama has been in crisis in the last decade, not solely because of its high cost in a period in which low-cost, high-rating programs have been favoured, nor because of Birt's cultivation of a risk-averse commissioning system. While these factors have compounded its malaise, British television drama as a whole experienced a crisis in the 1990s because of the problematic state of its dominant aesthetic, British social realism, which exhibited signs of exhaustion and self-pastiche, proving difficult to regenerate. Yet even in such conditions, the drama subgenres fared differently, depending both on conditions and on their autonomous capacity for aesthetic invention. In the ethnography I show that in the BBC the single play, the most costly, 'writerly' and risky form, has declined sharply while being required to evolve into international film or highly marketed televisual fare. In contrast the classic serial has been renewed by a reworking of historical realism, through new formal strategies that resist mere historical pastiche, as well as by new narrative approaches that read the past to disturb our understanding of the present, or that render the past strange. Popular series, on the other hand, have seen sustained invention through the coining of a post-social-realist aesthetic which, equalling the social commentary of the earlier tradition, remixes social realism's gritty, monochrome tone with dashes of humour, irony and surreality. The result is a language at once tragic and comic, popular and demanding, pleasurable and didactic. To grasp this divergence, then, is to pursue the specific trajectories of the different drama subgenres, as they condition the state of British television - without which, reduction reigns.[112] Similar accounts of the trajectories and differentiation of genre are given in *Uncertain Vision* in relation to documentary, a genre that witnessed a proliferation of subgenres in the late 1990s, themselves both generative and formulaic; and current affairs, a genre widely held to be in decline and the reinvention of which proved problematic.[113]

But it is not enough simply to trace difference inside the institution, its subjects and its genres. It is also imperative to trace the boundaries of the institution so as to identify its limits, what is absented or repressed - its constitutive outside. This is where Bourdieu's field analysis remains insightful, with its attention to the structuring of any field by the competitive-cum-complementary position-taking among rival actors. Both IRCAM and the BBC have to be understood in terms of their positioning within a field, via competitive relations with rivals both national and international. Such a dynamic extends also to key figures, as well as to the aesthetic discourses propounded by them. Thus, Boulez's aesthetic and philosophy developed in competitive dialogue with those of his acknowledged rivals Cage, Berio, Xenakis and so on, while in his writings he denounces postmodern and commercial popular musics. In parallel, as we have seen, IRCAM's musical identity is constituted through a double movement: the institutionalisation of Boulezian modernism, and the prohibition on popular and certain postmodern musics. Nor should we ignore the key role of cultural intermediaries in fuelling position-taking through their elaboration of critical discourses. Beyond this, however, we again confront the limits of Bourdieu's field analysis: the lack of a diachronic dimension to his conceptual armoury, particularly in the analysis of the aesthetic, without which it becomes impossible to account both for the waxing or waning of the aesthetic formations that we encounter in researching cultural production and, therefore, for agency.

[112] On the different aesthetic trajectories of the television drama subgenres, see Born 2004, chapter 8, pp. 344-72.
[113] On the aesthetic trajectories of the documentary and current affairs genres, see Born 2004, chapter 9.

To address this problem, it is necessary to forge new ways of bringing historical analysis together with the insights provided by ethnography. In both of my studies, as I have mentioned, the ethnography is combined with a historical reading of the political, economic and cultural dynamics, broadly, that lie behind the present. This is accomplished more explicitly in *Rationalizing Culture*, in which I develop a Foucaultian 'history of the present' that resists teleology by destabilising the self-evidence of contemporary arrangements. Instead, through a series of genealogies of different temporal scale – of the concept of the avant-garde; of the philosophy and aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism, and of musical modernism and postmodernism; of Boulez's career; of French cultural and music policy; of the fields of electronic and computer music - I point to the mechanisms and contingencies by which the present has been constructed, and to IRCAM as the haphazard conjunction of these several prehistories. The effect is to grant a certain autonomy, a formative momentum, to aesthetic modernism as a long-term system, and in doing so to probe its interrelations with adjacent genealogies. Through the mutual imbrication of the genealogies I am able to chart the mechanisms whereby a certain aesthetic and philosophy of musical modernism became ascendant from the mid twentieth century, accruing a cumulative authority and economic strength – that is, the creation of its canonic status. I show how this occurs on different planes: through the cultivation of the international reputation and charismatic leadership of its post-war champion, Boulez; through the French state's investment in Boulez and IRCAM as the means of placing French music and science at the centre of international currents; and through the linking of Boulezian modernism to international developments in technology and science, specifically the expansion of computer music, itself intimately related to cutting edge fields in computer science. In light of the several genealogies, it is possible to see how musical modernism plays out and is transformed, or not, in the present through the complex vantage-point given by ethnography.[114]

The object itself: Temporalities, invention, and value

The repeated return in this discussion to difference, history and diachrony recalls Foucault's methodological dicta. In a summarizing discussion of 'Questions of method', Foucault offers clarity in elaborating difference as a methodological principle. He outlines three modalities of difference to be utilised when tracing genealogy. The first is synchronic: that we should assume the internal differentiation of dominant cultural formations, analyzing both their regularities or coherence, and their dispersion. The second is diachronic: that we should trace the trajectory of such dominant cultural formations, assuming neither continuity nor discontinuity, nor a uniform rate of transformation; here we read the ethnographic material for its encapsulation of currents or dynamics of different temporal depth. The third is analytical: that in elucidating genealogy, we should effect 'a sort of multiplication or pluralization of causes…a multiplication [that] means analyzing an event according to the multiple processes that constitute it', leading to a 'polymorphism' of the elements brought into relation in the analysis, and of the domains of reference mobilised.[115]

[114] See Born 1995, chapters 2, 3 and 11.

[115] Foucault 2001, all pp. 227-8. He continues, 'Clearly, what I am proposing is at once too much and too little: too many diverse kinds of relations, too many lines of analysis, too little necessary unity. But this is precisely the point, both in historical analysis and political critique. We aren't, nor do we have to put ourselves, under the sign of a unitary necessity'.

Faced with these tasks, and returning to my analysis in *Rationalising Culture* of multiple genealogies of different temporal scale, further impetus in this direction is provided by recent discussions of temporality, particularly those from anthropology and history that point to the plurality of types of time. According to one, 'plurality in time-scales…is "normal" rather than [atypical of] human history. There is no such thing as "social time" except *in time*, and as part of what we usually mean by history'.[116] More acutely, and with reference to cultural production, Pinney employs Levi-Strauss and Kracauer to elaborate on multiplicity in temporalities. From Levi-Strauss he takes the possibility of histories "of different magnitude [each of which] organises specific data into a sequence which sets a time of its own". While from Kracauer he extends the idea of the 'nonhomogeneity' and 'uncontemporaneous' nature of time. Pinney comments, 'To make time "uncontemporaneous" is to insist on its multiplicity and difference'.[117] In studying visual cultures, he argues convincingly, we should therefore be alert to investigating 'the disjunctures between images and their historical location…. Images are not simply, always, a reflection of something happening elsewhere. They are part of an aesthetic, figural domain that can *constitute history*, and they exist in a temporality that is not necessarily coterminous with more conventional political temporalities'.[118]

It is now apparent that when analysing cultural production, it is productive to augment Gell's Husserlian portrayal of the temporal dimension of art in favour of the multiple temporalities that subtend cultural objects, and that are required in order to account both for the object, and for agency and invention. We can discern, I suggest, four such orders of temporality: first, narrative or diegetic time, what for music has been called its 'inner time';[119] second, the Husserlian dynamics of retention and protention that map the art corpus or genre as a distributed object; third, and relatedly, the variable temporalities constructed by the object in terms of the movement of repetition and difference, reproduction and invention in genre;[120] and fourth, the temporal ontologies or philosophical constructions of cultural-historical time manifest in notions of 'classicism', 'modernism', 'postmodernism', 'tradition', 'innovation', 'avant-garde' and so on, concepts that form part of the calculative agency of artists and that supervise the creation of any cultural object.[121]As the philosopher Peter Osborne observes, such concepts are 'categories of historical consciousness which are constructed at the level of the apprehension of history as a whole…. [T]hey are categories of historical totalisation in the medium of cultural experience'. Osborne continues that each of these categories

> 'involves…a distinctive way of temporalising "history" – through which the three dimensions of phenomenological or lived time (past, present and future) are linked together within the dynamic

[116] James and Mills 2005, p. 9, emphases in the original.
[117] Pinney 2005, all p. 264.
[118] Pinney 2005, pp. 265-6. There are parallels here with Koselleck's (2002) theory of 'conceptual history', which emphasises the way that historical process is marked by heterogeneous and multileveled temporalities evidencing different rates of change, as well as the constitutive nature of historical discourses and concepts of history, and yet the disparity between such discourses and historical realities.
[119] On music's 'inner time' see Schutz 1971. This order applies to all those cultural forms that encompass linear and narrative forms, including the literary and performance arts, and certain audio and visual media.
[120] See from art history Ackerman 1962, from literary theory Jauss 1982, from media studies Caughie 1991 and Born 1993. Straw (1991) exemplifies this third order in his analysis of two historically coexistent popular music genres, industrial rock and electronic dance music, where he highlights the distinctive generic temporalities (and spatialities) constructed by these musics and by the subcultures that they subtend: industrial rock a kind of static and repetitive, canonic classicism; dance music issuing a restless stream of innovation embodied in continual generic branchings that result in a proliferation of subgenres.
[121] Ackerman 1962; Osborne 1995; Koselleck 2002.

> and eccentric unity of a single historical view.…The historical study of cultural forms needs to be rethought within the framework of competing philosophies and politics of time.[122]

The elucidation of this fourth order of cultural-historical constructs makes it possible to resist teleological and evolutionary accounts of genre or style change, accounts that have been criticised from within both art history and anthropology. Feld, for example, argues against the relevance of Western ideas of progress in art for the analysis of Kaluli expressive forms, rejecting the universal equation of notions of innovation with artistic value. He stresses that 'Kaluli place no fetish premium on musical "innovation", "progress" or "development" and make no assumption that change is synonymous with vitality or that stasis denotes degeneration'.[123] Similarly, from art history, James Ackerman warns against the unrigorous equation of novelty and innovation with expressive value or quality.[124]

More generally, the framework outlined provides the basis for analysing creative agency and invention, problems illuminated by examining the interface between the different orders of temporality, in particular the third and fourth orders – between practice as evident in the dynamic relation of object to genre(s)-in-process, and temporal ontology. Assessment of the degree of invention immanent in a particular cultural object, then, cannot be read off the protagonists' discourse. It has to be made on the basis of an analysis, given the prevailing conception of cultural-historical time, of the actual properties and temporality of the object. This requires one to examine first the extent to which the object evidences either repetition or difference in relation to genre – whether it primarily contributes to reproduction, or inventively revivifies given genres. Having established this, it is then possible to go further and analyse the relation between the object/genre and the temporal ontology of the producing culture, asking such questions as: is classicism a supervising concept, and is this apparent in the qualities of the object in relation to genre, or is it confounded? Or if innovation is a norm, is this manifest in the degree of invention in the cultural object, such that difference outweighs repetition, protending new directions for the genre in question, or not?[125]

Rationalising Culture gives an illustration of this approach. By combining the ethnography with a genealogy of musical modernism from the early twentieth century to the late 1980s, and by probing the aesthetic qualities of IRCAM music, I am able to interrogate the Institute's position in this long-term aesthetic system. As a result I highlight IRCAM modernism's remarkable capacity to effect an inertial 'mobile stasis', its role in protending an aesthetic and discursive formation that, through its reproduction, resists or represses significant change - a state of affairs that, held up against IRCAM's own philosophy of history, might be termed

[122] Osborne 1995, p. ix. On the question of the mediation between phenomenological and cosmological perspectives on time, with reference to Ricoeur, see Osborne pp. 47-55.
[123] Feld 1994, p. 138.
[124] Ackerman 1962, p. 236.
[125] Let me clarify two key points. First, I am drawing a distinction between invention as those practices and objects that introduce a *difference that makes a difference* within or between given genres, inflecting them dynamically in propitious directions, whatever the governing ontology; and innovation as a norm or value particularly characteristic of modernist and post-modernist ontologies, which may or may not be matched in practice by real invention. Second, when writing of invention, I do not equate it with avant-garde gestures: invention within popular cultural genres often takes the form of a new object or practice that subtly and expressively revivifies and reinflects the genre, without any 'innovation' or radical rupture. The method that I am outlining, then, seeks both to proffer an analytics of invention applicable to any genre-in-process, and to develop an account of the role of particular ontologies in cultural and artistic practices, in which innovation (or invention) may or may not figure. The aim is to avoid the ontological projection that sees particular kinds of innovation as a universal telos, while also analyzing the actual relation between governing ontology and practices/objects.

anti-inventive.[126] That is, the analysis examines the third order of temporality – evidence of the primacy of repetition over difference in the generic dynamics that link IRCAM music to musical modernism – and holds it up against the fourth order – IRCAM's modernist ontology of cultural-historical time. In making this analysis I point to the formidable legitimacy achieved by the implicit interplay between two dimensions of IRCAM's aesthetic and philosophy: on the one hand its explicit discursive content, an avant-garde rhetoric committed to unceasing and radical innovation; on the other hand, a legitimacy stemming from its implicit structuration, its resilient continuity as an aesthetic formation of the *longue durée* traversing the twentieth century. There is, then, an ironic and antinomic double legitimation underpinning aesthetic modernism's institutionalization in IRCAM, and it is identified by charting the multiple temporalities at work in this assemblage.

A contrasting case is provided by those popular and mass cultural forms – such as commercial popular music, or television - the cultural-historical self-conception of which entails what might be called a normal genericism, a kind of easy classicism. Yet in terms of generic dynamics, while these forms often evidence a preponderance of imitative or formulaic output, with repetition ascendant, they can also witness rapid aesthetic invention in the guise of the proliferation of new subgenres, as well as within those subgenres. In popular music this occurred, for instance, in the electronic dance musics of the 1980s and 1990s;[127] while in British television it was evident, as described earlier, both in the appearance of a new popular drama aesthetic in the late 1990s, and in the accelerating appearance of novel popular documentary forms, including reality programming, from the mid 1990s. At such times we see again a disjuncture between generic dynamics and temporal ontology – in these cases, precisely the inverse of that exhibited by IRCAM modernism.

The methodological framework that I have advanced in this article entails in turn epistemological proposals for a post-positivist empiricism, an approach that involves an altered conception of the relations between theory and empirical research, upending the 'master-servant' paradigm that has prevailed in social theory. Empiricism is often equated with the belief that scientific research is grounded in direct observation or the existence of uncontestable facts; it also frequently implies an antagonistic attitude to theory. But following Whitehead and Deleuze, we can understand empiricism in a different way, as an approach that makes it possible for empirical research to have theoretical effects or to serve as a site for theoretical invention. Deleuze develops his case against rationalist philosophies, in which abstraction is absolutely prior: 'the abstract is given the task of explaining, and it is the abstract that is realised in the concrete'. In opposition to this account he outlines 'two characteristics by which Whitehead defined empiricism: the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (creativeness)'. Deleuze continues, 'Empiricism starts with a completely different evaluation [from rationalism]: analysing the states of things, in such a way that non-pre-existent concepts can be extracted from them'.[128] The aim, then, is a quite different kind of socio-cultural analysis to one that explains away empirical complexities in terms of pre-given abstractions. It signals a post-positivist empiricism, one that rescues empiricism from a particularly narrow understanding of the term. In this light, the strength of ethnographic fieldwork is that it throws up material and findings which cannot be incorporated into existing frameworks, and which demand that they be

[126] On the concept of anti-invention see Barry 2001, chapter 9.
[127] Straw 1991.
[128] Deleuze 1987, all p. vii-viii.

extended. It is characterised by a movement between prior substantive knowledge and theoretical approach, and the new insights given by fieldwork; each amends the other in a process of refinement of working analyses. Ethnography therefore entails an oscillation between phases of more deductive and more inductive work; it is a subtle tool for the application and the amendment of theory. At issue here are critical methodological and epistemological issues to do with the procedural nature of ethnographic research, a subject that can only be touched on here: in short, interpretation in fieldwork is, at best, the result of rigorous and cumulative labours, labours that can throw up material for theoretical invention.

In light of the preceding discussion, we come finally to questions of value and judgement. If, as I have suggested, the analysis of multiple temporalities makes it possible to evaluate IRCAM and its music as anti-inventive, this is not to foreclose the outcome of the methodology that I am proposing. In both of my ethnographies, while I examine producers' exegeses and that of knowledgable critics, I do not necessarily either endorse or oppose their judgements. As I have shown, I hold their discourse up against both the cultural object and a complex rendering of aesthetics, genre, social and temporal mediation, and ontology. The result is to achieve an understanding of each object as a basis, then, for critical evaluation – but one that, while it is informed by the actors' judgements, is not reducible to them. One aim of this article has therefore been to indicate how the sociology and anthropology of cultural production can assist in the interdisciplinary dialogue with the arts and humanities by providing a richer repertoire of methodological and conceptual resources to inform critical discourses and processes of judgement-making than before, generating a thicker discursive field. The goal is to redirect the field of criticism itself, away from the banalised optics of object in 'context', or telos of innovation, towards a critical field that is focally concerned with the social and material, the temporal and ontological, as these *mediate and imbue* the aesthetic. Such an enriched criticism will be enhanced by our growing reflexive, sociological understanding of the operations, institutionalisation and imbrication in processes of cultural production of what - by analogy with interpretive communities - might be called value communities.[129] In this way the sociology of judgement, of institutionalisation, but also of the object and of genre become part of the reflexive province of criticism. The intention, then, is to restore questions of aesthetics and form, now inflected through an analytics of mediation, and on this basis to proffer judgements of value and indicate their basis so as to revivify critical debate, not close it down. Given that the wider critical debates, whether they concern television, art or music, have often been inhibited in recent years by a relativistic impasse over questions of value,[130] such a reinvigoration of the agonistics of criticism is surely welcome.

There are two additional gains. The enriched criticism envisaged here is optimally placed to respond to the experimental engagement with social and material mediation that has become such a prominent element of creative practice in the arts, music and media in recent decades; indeed one source of the methodological and theoretical renewal suggested in this article is precisely the recognition that the terms of our critical and theoretical discourses have lagged behind these far-reaching changes in creative practice.[131] At the same time, a reflexive analytics of mediation, by retooling the conceptual armoury of public critical discourses, has the potential productively to destabilise established hierarchies of value not only within but,

[129] Born 2008; cf. Frow's (1995, p. 114) concept of 'regimes of value', drawn from Appadurai 1986.
[130] On the relativistic impasse on questions of value in relation to television, see Born 2000.
[131] I refer here to numerous developments in the arts since the 1960s, in which material and social mediation have come to the fore: from the foregrounding of socialities in the performance arts and their legacy in notions of 'social aesthetics' and 'relational aesthetics' (Bourriaud 2002), much of this drawing intertextually on non-Western and popular cultural forms, to the experimental materialities evident in art-science and new media arts.

crucially, across existing critical fields and value communities, animating cultural politics by installing new terms for the ongoing renegotiation of those value hierarchies.[132] This, in turn, has implications for future cultural policy.

It is striking that an analogous perspective comes from an anthropologist concerned with the growing challenges to indigenous art issued by the global art market. Myers, exploring the interpretive and evaluative functions of art criticism, stresses that the anthropology of art should not disengage from such discourses. Rather, he suggests, faced with the complexities of intercultural production and the entry of indigenous art into the international art trade, anthropology must assist in the reflexive reconfiguration of the dominant fields of criticism: 'Only in attempting to analyse and recognise how these discursive spaces are produced and contested [can we] begin to resituate the categories and hierarchies of value in ways that will reveal the outlines of an intercultural space'.[133] Myers' commitment to placing criticism in its historical moment, allied to his insistence that those from anthropology and sociology who study creative practices should engage reflexively in the production of criticism, are exemplary in acknowledging that one cannot stand outside the critical mediation. There is no outside: there is only denial of one's role in criticism, and of the historicity of one's contribution. The kind of interdisciplinary perspectives that I advocate in this article, then, can make it possible not only to analyse cultural production in a way that advances our understanding of cultural historical processes, but to intervene in those processes to potentially creative effect. They can only do this by cultivating an intimate knowledge of, and a close dialogue with, contemporary developments in the arts, music and media, but without capture by the siren calls for affirmation. The ambition of a theory of cultural production must be encompassment: the ability to take in and analyse diacritically, as much and more than the practitioners and cultural fields themselves, the movements and logics of their social and aesthetic dynamics; and to read one tendency in relation its others, but fully historically and with an 'internal' comprehension of the positivity of the aesthetic as it is generatively conceived and practised by cultural producers.

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[132] See Frow (1995 pp. 150-4) on the challenges of value relativism issued by the incommensurability of value criteria between regimes of value, and the difficulties entailed in making judgements across such regimes.
[133] Myers 1994, p. 35.

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