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ARTISTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH MONADNOCK: A HERMENEUTIC
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Antioch University New England

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Jonathan W. Coffin

ORCID Scholar No. 0009-0007-6860-0693

December 2023

ARTISTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH MONADNOCK: A HERMENEUTIC
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

This dissertation, by Jonathan W. Coffin, has
been approved by the committee members signed below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of
Antioch University New England
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

ARTISTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH MONADNOCK: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Keene, NH

This hermeneutic phenomenological study discloses the lived experience of creating art in association with New Hampshire's Mount Monadnock. This study reveals the potential for artistic invention in association with place gradually to undermine an established sense of separation from environment and to prompt conscious awareness of continuity with environment. A series of interviews with four artists who create art of or in the presence of Monadnock revealed in the lived experience of creating Monadnock art a process that consists of five phases: first encounter, abstract appreciation, existential understanding, sustained attention, and continuity. A hermeneutic circular method of interpretation based upon the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg Gadamer was used to interpret this experiential process in conjunction with Arnold Berleant's non-conceptual environmental aesthetics of engagement and with various works in the field of ecological ontology. In addition to disclosing the aesthetic experiential dimensions of artistic invention in association with place, this circular interpretive process revealed two practical points of tension: one between the descriptive and the prescriptive dimensions of Berleant's aesthetic model and another between the intellectual medium and the holistic message of ecological ontological literature. Ultimately, this study indicated the possibility for artistic invention in association with place in the experience of the artist to resolve these points of tension, to undermine the hegemony of the ontological dualism that causes

ecological crisis, and to prompt an holistic sense of being in the world that might motivate ecological restoration. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (<https://aura.antioch.edu>) and OhioLINK ETD Center (<https://etd.ohiolink.edu>).

Keywords: Monadnock, art, environmental aesthetics, ecological ontology

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Ilana Ofgang, my children, Muirgheal and Nathaniel Coffin, and my parents, Bruce and Maria Coffin.

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The long process of conceiving and writing this dissertation was, in many ways, a communal undertaking. It required the regular encouragement, the time, the investment, the emotional support, and the constructive criticism that I gained from a large community of professors, colleagues, friends, and family members. I am grateful to everyone who took interest in my research, who expressed their faith in my ability to finish my dissertation at times when I doubted myself, and who helped me to achieve my goal of seeing this project to completion.

I owe a principal debt of gratitude to John Grim who encouraged me to pursue a PhD and to Stephen D. Blackmer, who suggested that I apply to Antioch University New England's PhD program in Environmental Studies.

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In the process of conducting my research, I was fortunate to work with exceedingly cooperative and inspiring research participants Jill Fischman, Ernest Hebert, Mary Iselin, and

Jim Kates. I attribute the persistence of my interest in my research topic, in part, to their willingness to think deeply and carefully about their experiences of engaging artistically with Monadnock, to their patience with my probing questions, and to the sensitivity and the care with which they articulated their thoughts.

Throughout my tenure in AUNE's PhD program, I gained tremendous support and inspiration from my Antioch professors and from my cohort. I am particularly thankful to have studied under Jimmy Karlan, Jean Kayira, Peter Palmiotto, and Fred Taylor who helped me in their own ways to discern and to clarify my research interests. While I gained tremendous feedback and support from all of my cohort members, I am indebted especially to my writing partners, Eric McDuffie and Laurie Stuhlbarg, who were always willing to listen to me and to help me clarify my thoughts.

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Finally, I owe my interest in ecological thought, in part, to experiences in wild places that I shared with a number of close friends and family members. I am thankful to Brian Dabkowski and Stacey Rosenberg for guiding me on a number of formative explorations of landscapes in the American West and for exemplifying the sort of continuity with place that I addressed in my research. I am grateful also to my sister, Elizabeth Coffin, and to my friends, Thomas Hallaran and Elizabeth Cox, for backpacking with me in the Sierra Nevada and for listening to me explain early iterations of my research interests.

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In the course of my academic pursuits, I have been blessed by the support of my parents, Bruce Coffin and Maria Coffin, who always encouraged me to attend carefully to my lived experience, who consistently took interest in my ideas, and who exemplified in their own distinctive ways the potential for art to express and to inspire an ecological sense of belonging.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION: THE PHENOMENON OF ARTISTIC INVENTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH MONADNOCK

Introduction

Since the early 1970s, when the environment first summoned widespread attention in the humanities, an explanation of the origin of contemporary environmental crisis has developed that has come to exercise perennial influence. This explanation, which has gained expression in the work of numerous scholars of various fields in the humanities, presumes the interactive understanding of environment that natural ecologists have promoted since the late 19th century. Indeed, it holds that environmental crisis is principally an ecological problem—a problem, that is, in the relational dynamics of the world’s component parts. Unlike natural ecologists, however, scholars in the humanities have identified this destructive interaction as a consequence of intellectual suppositions that underlie the Western cultural tradition. They have attributed contemporary environmental crisis to a sharp distinction that the Western cultural tradition draws between humanity and the environment. Although they disagree about the historical origin of this distinction, they advance a common argument that the Western cultural conception of humanity and the environment as separate ontological categories coupled with a tendency to assign primary value to the category of humanity have long discouraged human awareness of the reciprocal contingency of human and environmental welfare. This lack of awareness, they argue, has long permitted behavior that is harmful to humanity and the environment alike.

Under the influence of this understanding of environmental crisis, scholars in the humanities have worked both to explain the origin and implications of the ontological division to which they attribute environmental crisis and to develop a means of recovering the ecological sense of being in the world that the Western cultural tradition supposedly undermines. These efforts have prompted the development of “environmental” or “ecological” subfields within each

of the disciplines that the humanities comprises. In each of these subfields, scholars have addressed the methods and the content of their fields as causes of the ontological division that underlies ecological crisis, on the one hand, and as potential means of combating such division and promoting an ecological understanding of being, on the other. In this way, scholars in various environmental subfields in the humanities have worked to challenge ontological division and its consequences and to promote an integrated understanding of the relationship of humanity and the environment.

While the work of these scholars serves the necessary purpose of revealing the human cultural sources of ecological crisis and the possibility of a sustainable way of being in the world, it also reinforces the very ontological division that it opposes. This limitation arises not from the content of this work, but rather from the academic literary genre in which this content gains expression. This genre presumes the primacy of intellectual activity among the multitude of factors that being in the world comprises. That is to say, it supposes that ways of being in the world follow from ways of thinking about being in the world and, therefore, that a change in our thought about being in the world can prompt a consequent change in all other dimensions of our being in the world. As many of these authors observe, however, belief in the primacy of the intellect that these arguments presume is itself a product of the ontological division that these arguments oppose. This belief follows from related Western cultural suppositions of the identity of truth and reason and the understanding of reason as a uniquely human faculty—suppositions that effectively distinguish the being of humans from the being of the rest of the world by affording humans exclusive access to truth and by abstracting the pursuit of truth from engagement in the material world. There is a tension, therefore, between the ecological ontologies that these arguments propose and the ontological division that they quietly reinforce.

This tension inhibits the work of scholars in the environmental humanities, in and of itself, from bringing about the ecological ways of being in the world that these scholars promote.

The work of implementing an ecological ontologies, therefore, requires recourse to some sort of practical medium that might appeal to the dimensions of our being other than the intellect — dimensions that situate us within, rather than apart from, the world that we help to form. That is to say, the possibility of our coming to be in the world in a way that accords with our inherent interdependence upon all of the other beings that constitute our world hinges upon our ability not only to *think about* ourselves, but fully to *experience* ourselves, as members of the broader community of beings that constitutes our world. By affording a kind of intuitive awareness of our existential belonging to the world, such experience might increase recognition of ontological division and its harmful consequences and encourage ways of being that sustain the world and the welfare of humanity.

While conducting research on artistic invention in association with Monadnock—a mountain in southwestern New Hampshire—I came unexpectedly to discover one such practical medium for implementing ecological ontologies. Initially, the purpose of my research was to discover both why people engage in artistic invention in association with Monadnock and how the work of this artistic invention conditions the artist’s aesthetic appreciation of the mountain. In the process of interpreting a series of interviews that I conducted with four artists who have produced art in association with the mountain, I came to recognize that the artists’ aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock evolves gradually as they produce art in association with the mountain. This evolution, I discovered, comprises five experiential phases that lead the artist from an initial sense of separation from Monadnock to an ultimate sense of interconnection with Monadnock. In addition to fulfilling my initial research objective, therefore, I came to

understand the potential for environmental aesthetic appreciation to serve as a medium for an ecological sense of being, and I came to identify artistic invention in association with Monadnock and places generally as an experiential process that triggers the evolution of aesthetic appreciation towards this ecological sense of being. Thus, I came to identify artistic invention in association with place as a practical medium for implementing ecological ontologies.

In what follows of this introductory chapter, I will offer summary explanation of the various interests that motivated the empirical research and interpretation presented in this dissertation. For the purpose of defining the phenomenon that is the principal subject of this dissertation, I will first offer an overview of Monadnock and the history of artistic invention in association with the mountain. Next, I will introduce generally the hermeneutic phenomenological design that I used to conduct my research, and I will discuss how this design both complements my research interests and allows my research to fill a lacuna in the literature on Monadnock. Finally, I will offer summary discussion of a conceptual problem in environmental aesthetics, and I will attribute the experiential possibilities that I discerned in the process of artistic invention in association with Monadnock to the way in which this process resolves in the experience of the artist this environmental aesthetic conceptual problem.

The History of Artistic Invention in Association with Monadnock

In the region of southwestern New Hampshire, a solitary mountain rises 3,165 feet above sea level. The mountain's name, "Monadnock," is an Algonquin word that describes the

geography that it has come to identify.¹ The word translates roughly to “mountain that stands alone”—a phrase that evokes both the form of the mountain itself and the character of the land that surrounds it. Standing between 1,500 and 2,000 feet above the expanse of level and rolling land at its base and 30 miles from any mountain of comparable height, Monadnock is a point of contrast in the geography of southwestern New Hampshire—a quintessential inselberg, or “island mountain” that rises abruptly from the plain that surrounds it.²

Over the course of the mountain’s long human cultural history, the term “Monadnock,” as a description of the mountain, has come to gain figurative as well as geographic significance. Indeed, from regional, continental, and even global standpoints, the mountain has come to stand alone in a human historical sense as much as it stands alone in a geographical sense. In New England, Monadnock has gained distinction among landforms as the principal identifier of the geographical region and the human culture of southwestern New Hampshire. Thus, the “Monadnock Region” has come to designate an area that extends from the southwestern corner of New Hampshire east to the town of Milford, north to the town of Marlow, and south to the Massachusetts border.³ In the culture of this region, Monadnock has come to stand alone as the most popular eponym for various businesses and institutions, including the region’s school district and its community hospital. Moreover, the mountain has come to host more than 125,000

¹ A.L. Rydant and K. J. Bayr, “The Grand (Mount) Monadnock,” in *Geographical Snapshots of North America: Commemorating the 27th Congress of the International Geographical Union and Assembly*, ed. D.G. Janelle (New York: Guilford Press, 1992), 4.

² H. Bremer and H. Sander, “Inselbergs: Geomorphology and Geoecology,” in *Inselbergs*, eds. S. Porembski and S. Barthlott (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer, 2000), 8.

³ Rydant and Bayr, “The Grand (Mount) Monadnock,” 2.

visitors annually and thus to become the most climbed mountain in the Western Hemisphere and the second most climbed mountain in the world behind Mount Fuji.⁴ Finally, as a consequence of the precision with which Monadnock exemplifies the form of a solitary mountain, the term “monadnock” has gained use alongside the term “inselberg” in the jargon of geography as a general identifier of the world’s solitary mountains.⁵ Thus, in addition to the cultural and recreational distinction that Monadnock has gained, the mountain has come to stand alone as a geographical prototype—as the archetypal example of mountains that stand alone.

In the cultural history of the United States, the singularity of Monadnock has both prompted and followed from a large, diverse, and ever expanding corpus of artistic invention. This corpus comprises artistic renderings of Monadnock and artistic renderings of subjects other than Monadnock that the mountain nonetheless has helped to inspire. Moreover, this corpus has emerged from artistic production that spans the whole history of human habitation of southwestern New Hampshire. Indeed, humans have created art in association with Monadnock for as long as they have lived in close proximity to the mountain. In the course of this long history of artistic invention, the corpus of art associated with the mountain has come to encompass an ever greater diversity of media and subject matter. While art that addresses Monadnock as a principal subject consisted initially of oral narratives, it came later to include works of literature, visual art, music, and performance art. As the variety of artistic renderings of Monadnock has increased, in turn, so too has the volume and diversity of art created in close

⁴ Rydant and Bayr, “The Grand (Mount) Monadnock,” 8.

⁵ Bremer and Sander, “Inselbergs: Geomorphology and Geoecology,” 8.

proximity to the mountain that addresses subjects other than Monadnock itself. On account of the mountain's association with an artistic corpus of such outstanding magnitude, diversity, and cultural significance, Monadnock has come to stand alone in an artistic sense among the mountains of New England and the United States in general.

Among the communities that are indigenous to southwestern New Hampshire, Monadnock has long been associated with the composition and the transmission of oral literature that explains the origin and the communal significance of the region's geographical features.⁶ These "earthshaper" narratives, many of which are as old and persistent as the Abenaki communities that composed them, attribute Monadnock and its environs to the primordial creative activity of a mythological being named Odzihozo.⁷ In one version of these narratives recounted by Abenaki elder Ambroise Obomsawin and recorded by anthropologist Gordon Day in the early 1980s, Odzihozo forms the geography of the Abenaki homeland as he moves himself from one place to another. "Very long ago," Obomsawin explains, Odzihozo "made mountains and hills rivers and lakes and weather."⁸ Since Odzihozo's legs were then too short to allow him to walk, "he had to sit and he used his hands to be able to travel."⁹ As he moved in this way through the Abenaki homeland, he filled "his hands with sand to make mountains and hills."¹⁰ As a prominent geographical feature the origin of which this narrative recounts, Monadnock

⁶ Margaret M. Bruchac, "Earthshapers and Placemakers: Algonkian Indian Stories and the Landscape," in *Indigenous Archaeologies: Decolonizing Theory and Practice*, eds. Claire Smith and H. Martin Wobst (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 56.

⁷ Bruchac, "Earthshapers and Placemakers: Algonkian Indian Stories and the Landscape," 64.

⁸ Gordon M. Day, "Abenaki Place Names in the Champlain Valley," *International Journal of American Linguistics* (1981): 147.

⁹ Day, "Abenaki Place Names in the Champlain Valley," 147.

¹⁰ Day, "Abenaki Place Names in the Champlain Valley," 147.

helped to inspire the composition of this and other such cosmogonical narratives and thereafter to motivate their development and their transmission.

The arrival of European settler colonists to the region of southwestern New Hampshire in the early 18th century diversified the medium, the form, and the content of literature associated with Monadnock. In contrast to the oral literature of the Monadnock region's indigenous inhabitants, these settler colonists produced a corpus of written literature that includes both poetry and prose compositions. These compositions celebrate the grandeur of Monadnock as a vehicle for understanding basic truths about the human condition. While most of these compositions identify the mountain as a source of theological understanding, others address it as a medium for appreciating the relation of humanity and the natural world. Authors such as William Boum Oliver Peabody, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, William Ellery Channing, Edna Dean Proctor, and Rudyard Kipling identify Monadnock as a medium of insight into the nature of God and God's providence in the world.¹¹ Other authors such as George Willis Cooke, Albert Perry, Mary Belle Fox, John White Chadwick, J.E. Nesmith, Richard Burton, and Mary Chandler Jones address Monadnock as a powerful and permanent geographic fixture that reveals by contrast the frailty and the transience of the human condition.¹² In multiple ways,

¹¹ William Boum Oliver Peabody, "Monadnock," in *Poems for Monadnock*, eds. Cami L. Jack and William L. Jack (Francestown: Golden Quill Press, 1993), 3–4; Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Monadnoc," in Jack and Jack, 15; Henry David Thoreau, "Thoreau's Horizon Mountains," in Jack and Jack, 6; William Ellery Channing, "Days on Monadnock," in Jack and Jack, 27; Edna Dean Proctor, "Monadnock in October," in Jack and Jack, 40; Rudyard Kipling, *In the Sight of Monadnock*, (Chicago: Cornhill Press, 1904), 1–15.

¹² George Willis Cooke, "Old Times and New in Dublin, New Hampshire," *New England Magazine* 20, March 1899–August 1899): 761; Albert Perry, "The Grand Monadnock" in Jack and Jack, 10; Mary Belle Fox, "Jaffrey and Monadnock," in Jack and Jack, 36; John White Chadwick, "Monadnock from Chesterfield," in Jack and Jack, 37;

therefore, 19th century written literature that addresses Monadnock draws attention to the grandeur of the mountain and its revelatory effect upon those who appreciate it.

While 20th century literature associated with Monadnock continued to address the mountain in contrast to the human condition, a broader appreciation of Monadnock's immunity to the forces of historical change came to eclipse the 19th century appreciation of the mountain as a medium of theological insight.¹³ A minority of 20th century authors, such as John Maxson and Morris Bishop, perpetuate the 19th century distinction between the supposed permanence of Monadnock and the impermanence of the human condition.¹⁴ These authors describe experiences in which the unchanging form of Monadnock summons by contrast an individual's heightened awareness of mortality. A larger number of 20th century literary compositions associated with Monadnock, however, broaden the scope and the significance of this awareness to address the mountain as an historical witness that resists the mutability of the world around it. This appreciation of Monadnock gains expression in association with themes of power, apocalypse, and temporal convergence. Such authors as Charles N. Holmes, Amy Lowell, W.F. Heath, Robert Francis, and William LaPage attribute the mountain's immunity in the face of historical change either to its geographical dominance over the surrounding landscape or to its endurance

J.E. Nesmith, "Monadnoc." in *Jack and Jack*, 39; Richard Burton, "Two Mountains," in *Jack and Jack*, 41; Mary Chandler Jones, "Mount Monadnock and the Green Mountains," in *Jack and Jack*, 42.

¹³ An exception to this trend of development is Tom O'Connell's *Monadnock Revelations: A Spiritual Memoir* (Sanctuary Unlimited, 1999). In opposition to other 20th century Monadnock authors, O'Connell identifies the "Monadnock Mountains" [sic.] as a site of divine revelation.

¹⁴ John Maxson, "The Old Man and Monadnock," in *Jack and Jack*, 57; Morris Bishop, "A New Hampshire Boy," in *Poetry*, 19, no. 6 (March 1922): 316.

against the forces that bring about change in the world.¹⁵ Other authors, such as Edwin Arlington, Lord Dunsany, and Don Burness address Monadnock as historical witness in association with an apocalyptic future in which the mountain persists after the defining features of the present age have passed away.¹⁶ Finally, authors such as John Fletcher, Galway Kinnell, and William Holmes Davis address Monadnock as a site of temporal convergence where dimensions of the history that the mountain has witnessed meld in the experience of the individual.¹⁷ In various ways, therefore, 20th century authors distinguish the supposed permanence of Monadnock from the change that conditions the world around it.

Twenty-first century literature associated with Monadnock has given expression to both historic and novel modes of appreciating the mountain. In accordance with the dominant 19th century appreciation of Monadnock in association with themes of religion, Edie Clark addresses the mountain as both a site of pilgrimage and an object of worship.¹⁸ Moreover, following the 19th century distinction between the supposed immutability of Monadnock and the change that defines the human condition, G.C. Waldrep recounts an experience of failing to summit the mountain and of thus coming to acknowledge the deterioration of his physical strength.¹⁹ Finally,

¹⁵ Charles N. Holmes, "Sunset on Monadnock," in Jack and Jack, 43; Amy Lowell, *The Poetry of Amy Lowell*. (Portable Poetry, 2012), 9; W.F. Heath, "To 'The Mountain Herald,'" in Jack and Jack, 47; Robert Francis, "Monadnock," *The Massachusetts Review* 17, no. 3 (Autumn, 1976): 435; William LaPage, "The Roar of the Mountain," in Jack and Jack, 54.

¹⁶ Edwin Arlington Robinson, "Monadnock Through the Trees," in Jack and Jack, 44; Lord Dunsany, "In New Hampshire," in Jack and Jack, 45; Don Burness, "Monadnock," in Jack and Jack, 53.

¹⁷ John Gould Fletcher, "Ascent of Monadnock," *Poetry* 51, no. 1 (October 1937), 14; Galway Kinnell, "Flower Herding on Mount Monadnock," in Jack and Jack, 50; William Holmes Davis, "A Ribbon of Road," in Jack and Jack, 55.

¹⁸ Edie Clark, *Monadnock Tales* (Peterborough: Brown Rabbit Press, 2002), 10.

¹⁹ G.C. Waldrep, "On Failing to Hike Mount Monadnock," *Southern Humanities Review* 49, no. 4 (2015): 31.

in agreement with the 20th century appreciation of Monadnock as a site of temporal convergence, Rodger Martin describes an experience in which the natural condition of the mountain's past melds with incidents in the human culture of the present.²⁰ These historic modes of appreciating Monadnock coincide in 21st century Monadnock literature with novel appreciations of the mountain in association with authenticity and criminality. Such authors as Ted Mathys, David Rothenberg, and Gary Harrington address Monadnock as a medium of discovery in association with which people come to recognize the true nature of their being in the world.²¹ Finally, such authors as Jack Coey, Karl L. Putnam, and Jack Kraichnan address Monadnock as the site of historic and imagined incidents of murder that remain unexplained.²² Thus, 21st century Monadnock literature combines historic and novel modes of appreciating the mountain.

Beginning in the 1840s, a growing corpus of Monadnock visual art came to rival in magnitude and cultural significance the mountain's established body of literature. In accordance with this earlier literary corpus, visual art created in association with Monadnock became ever more diverse as time passed. While the early trend of portraying the mountain in conjunction with the human culture of its environs has persisted throughout the visual art history of

²⁰ "Along the Monadnock Watch," Monadnock Pastoral Poets and Writers, accessed August 9, 2023, http://monadnockpastoralpoets.org/?page_id=66.

²¹ Ted Mathys, "A Woodland Pattern," *Conjunctions* no. 59 (2012): 133; David Rothenberg, "An Innocent Climb," in David Rothenberg *Always the Mountains* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); Garry Harrington, *Chasing Summits: In Pursuit of High Places and an Unconventional Life* (Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2016).

²² Jack Coey, *Lights from Monadnock* (Keene: Fifth and Center Books, 2010); Karl L. Putnam, *In the Shadow of Mount Monadnock* (Jaffrey: Savron Graphics, 2012); Jack Kraichnan, *Winter to Winter: a Year of Seasonal Change in the Monadnock Foothills* (Dublin: Snow Book Press, 2005).

Monadnock, a subsequent trend of focusing exclusively upon the mountain as it appears from diverse vantages, in various seasons, and at different times of day has come ultimately to dominate the corpus of Monadnock visual art.

Both of these trends are discernible in the earliest known artistic renderings of the mountain. In a converse manner, the first known portrait of Monadnock—Jesse Talbot’s 1841 painting entitled, *Landscape, View of Grand Monadnock, New Hampshire, from the North*,—exemplifies the exclusive focus upon the mountain that would come to characterize later Monadnock visual art.²³ In contrast to Talbot, all other early Monadnock artists address the mountain as a feature of Cheshire County’s broader human cultural landscape. In each of these compositions, Monadnock stands in the background of an idealized, pastoral depiction of the peaceful and cooperative coexistence of humanity and the natural world. For example, Charles T. Jackson’s 1844 painting entitled “Monadnock Mountain from Jaffrey” shows the mountain on the horizon of the village of Jaffrey Center.²⁴ In a similar manner, Charles K. Mason’s 1858 drawing entitled “Monadnock Mountain and Lake” addresses Monadnock as the horizon of a human cultural landscape that consists of agricultural and recreational components.²⁵ Finally, from a vantage that is nearly identical to that of Mason’s drawing, Amos Emerson Dolbear’s ca.

²³ Jesse Talbot, *Landscape, View of Grand Monadnock, New Hampshire, from the North*, 1841, oil on canvas, private collection of D. Elliot.

²⁴ Charles T. Jackson, “Monadnock Mountain from Jaffrey,” in Charles T. Jackson, *Final Report on the Geology and Minerology of the State of New Hampshire; with Contributions Towards the Improvement of Agriculture and Metallurgy* (Concord: Carroll and Baker, State Printers, 1844), 87, accessed August 9, 2023, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435077248706&seq=7>.

²⁵ Charles K. Mason, “Monadnock Mountain and Lake” in *Map of Cheshire, Co., New Hampshire from Actual Survey by L. Fagan* (Philadelphia: Smith and Morley Publishers, 1858), accessed August 9, 2023, <https://tedsvintageart.com/products/vintage-map-of-cheshire-county-new-hampshire-1858>.

1860 lithograph entitled “Mount Monadnock, Height, 3,200 Feet” shows Monadnock itself as a subject of the human cultural activity that Jackson and Mason’s compositions situate at the base of the mountain.²⁶ In all of these early artistic renderings of Monadnock, the dimensions of the human cultural landscape draw the viewer’s gaze toward the mountain, and the mountain, in turn, lends a compositional unity to the human cultural activity that each rendering portrays. Thus, the composition of all of these early Monadnock renderings express a 19th century pastoral ideal of peaceful cooperation of humanity and the natural world.²⁷

While this pastoral ideal has continued to influence visual artistic renderings of Monadnock since the late 19th century, artistic interest in the form of the mountain came gradually to eclipse this earlier pastoral interest in the relationship between the mountain and the human culture that surrounds it. This shift in the focus of Monadnock compositions began early in the 1860s when the mountain first summoned the attention of professional artists. In contrast to early amateur Monadnock art in which human culture and the mountain each draws attention to the other, early professional Monadnock compositions portray a unilateral relationship between human culture and the mountain. Thus, while the human cultural dimensions of these compositions draw attention to the mountain beyond them, the mountain draws attention to none of the compositions’ human cultural dimensions. This unilateralism describes the Monadnock

²⁶ Amos Emerson Dolbear, *Mount Monadnock, Height, 3,200 Feet*, lithograph on paper, ca. 1860, New Hampshire Historical Society, accessed August 9, 2023, <https://www.nhhistory.org/object/142909/lithograph>.

²⁷ Alan Rumrill, “Mountain as Muse: The Artists who Painted Mt. Monadnock” (online lecture co-sponsored by the Harris Center for Conservation Education and the Historical Society of Cheshire County, August 11, 2021), accessed on August 9, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUzharGmNFQ&t=495s>.

compositions of John White Allen Scott, Alvan Fisher, Helen Knowlton, Rose Lamb, and Julia Dunn, all of whom addressed Monadnock as an artistic subject between 1860s and the 1880s.²⁸ In these compositions, miniature human cultural features such as farm animals, roads, stone walls, and people themselves summon by contrast appreciation of the immensity of the mountain beyond them.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, artistic interest in the form of Monadnock itself as it appears in various climatological and temporal conditions came to surpass earlier interest in Monadnock's situation in the human cultural landscape. At the forefront of this more exclusive focus on the mountain were two contemporaneous painters whose work and broader influence would come to dominate the corpus of Monadnock visual art: William Preston Phelps and Abbott Handerson Thayer. Phelps gained distinction as "the painter of Monadnock" following a revelatory experience of viewing the mountain and discovering his vocation to address Monadnock as a principal artistic subject.²⁹ This discovery motivated Phelps to compose hundreds of paintings that render the mountain in diverse conditions and from various points of view. In a majority of these paintings, the mountain rises on the distant horizon over an expansive foreground and middle ground of meadows, forests, and lakes.³⁰ In common with Phelps, Thayer produced a prodigious and diverse corpus of Monadnock paintings that focus all

²⁸ John White Allen Scott, *View of Mount Monadnock, New Hampshire*, 1872, oil on canvas, 12"x20", Oxford Gallery, Rochester, NY, accessed August 9, 2023; *Summer Near Monadnock*, oil on canvas, 15.5"x23.5", <http://americanartgallery.org/exhibit/details/view/sshow/id/57/pictureId/5221/tagid/50>.

²⁹ Charles E. Hurd, "A Painter of Monadnock," *New England Magazine* 17 (September 1897–February 1898): 367; Craig Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain* (Keene: Surry Cottage Books, 2007), 249–251.

³⁰ See for example, William Preston Phelps, *Mount Monadnock from Stone Pond*, ca. 1900, oil on canvas, Currier Art Museum.

but exclusively upon the mountain; however, in contrast to Phelps, Thayer rendered Monadnock from vantages that are relatively close to the base of the mountain.³¹ In a majority of Thayer's Monadnock paintings, therefore, different geographic features of the mountain itself occupy foreground, middle ground, and background, and the form of the mountain as a whole dominates each canvas. Phelps and Thayer, each in his own way, brought to culmination a gradual shift in the artistic portrayal of Monadnock. In opposition to earlier artists of the mountain who rendered it in conjunction with the human cultural landscape that surrounds it, Phelps and Thayer focused on Monadnock in isolation from its human surroundings.

In addition to producing hundreds of Monadnock paintings, Phelps and Thayer instructed numerous art students whose work would expand significantly the corpus of Monadnock visual art.³² Thayer drew to the village of Dublin a particularly distinguished community of art students that would later come to be known as the Dublin Art Colony. These students included George de Forest Brush, Barry Faulkner, Frank Weston Benson, Rockwell Kent, Richard Sumner Meryman, Jr., and Alexander James, all of whom would gain distinction as professional artists and would produce their own paintings of Monadnock.³³ In accordance with the precedent that Thayer established, many of these artists would go on to work as art teachers themselves. For example, Frank Weston Benson assisted Thayer in the instruction of Richard Sumner Meryman,

³¹ See for example, Abbott Handerson Thayer, *Below Mount Monadnock*, 1913, oil on panel, 9"x7.25", Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College.

³² Edie Clark, "William Preston Phelps—Painter of Monadnock (1848–1923)" in Edie Clark, "Inspired By God: The Artists of Mount Monadnock (1888–1950)," (Monadnock Art: Friends of the Dublin Art Colony, 2008), accessed August 10, 2023, <https://monadnockart.org/william-preston-phelps/>; Brandon, 262.

³³ Richard S. Meryman, Jr., "Abbott Handerson Thayer (1849–1921)" in Clark "Inspired by God"; Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, 262.

Jr. and Alexander James and taught such students of his own as Martha Silsbee.³⁴ Moreover, George de Forest Brush assisted Thayer in the instruction of Barry Faulkner.³⁵ Among Thayer's understudies, however, none drew a more influential community of students than Alexander James, who trained such painters as Gouri Ivanov-Rinov, Onni Saari, and Albert Duvall Quigley, each of whom gained distinction as a professional artist and produced at least one painting of Monadnock.³⁶ Thus, the art instruction of Phelps and Thayer motivated the production of numerous artistic renderings of Monadnock that would expand the corpus of art associated with the mountain.

The trends of rendering Monadnock as a dimension of the human cultural landscape and as a form unto itself have persisted in the Monadnock art of the 20th and 21st centuries. On the one hand, such 20th century artists as Barry Faulkner, George de Forest Brush, Gouri Ivanov-Rinov, Richard Sumner Meryman, Jr., Alexander James, Lilla Cabot Perry, Herman Dudley Murphy, and Albert Duvall Quigley continued to include human cultural features in their renderings of the mountain.³⁷ This trend has persisted in the work of such contemporary artists as

³⁴ Meryman, Jr., "Abbott Handerson Thayer (1849–1921)."

³⁵ Meryman, Jr., "Abbott Handerson Thayer (1849-1921)"

³⁶ Edie Clark, "Alexander James—Psychological Portraits, Landscapes of the Heart (1890–1946)" in Clark "Inspired by God."

³⁷ For example, Barry Faulkner, "Men of Monadnock," in Robert L. McGrath, *Art and the American Conservation Movement* (Boston: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2001), 63; George de Forest Brush, *Mother and Child: A Modern Madonna*, 1919, oil on canvas, 43.5"x35.63", Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn NY; Gouri Ivanov-Rinov, *Untitled*, 1955, 48"x96", watercolor, Dublin Public Library, Dublin NH; Richard Sumner Meryman, Jr., *Landscape of Mount Monadnock*, oil on masonite, 18"x21.75", accessed on August 10, 2023, <https://www.thecobbs.com/auction-2013-07-06-lot-189A.html>; Alexander James, *Pell's View*, 1944, oil on canvas, 27.75"x45", accessed on August 10, 2023, <https://monadnockart.org/alexander-james/>; Lilla Cabot Perry, *Mount Monadnock from Hancock, New Hampshire*, 1922, 20.1"x26.2", oil on canvas, Grogan and Company, Boston, MA; Herman Dudley Murphy, *Monadnock from Troy Road*, 1939, 32.5"x37.5", oil on canvas, Milford, NH; Albert

Meredith Brown, Mary Iselin, Alicia Drakiotes, Gary Shepard, Eleanor Briggs, and Peggy van Valkenburgh.³⁸ On the other hand, a greater number of 20th and 21st century Monadnock compositions have addressed the mountain in isolation from features of the human culture that surrounds it. The work of such 20th century artists as Richard Lonsdale Brown, Charles Herbert Woodbury, Rockwell Kent, Frederick Rhodes Sisson, Robert Emmet Owen, Henry Webster Rice, and Charles Curtis Allen addresses the form of Monadnock apart from its human cultural surroundings.³⁹ This trend has persisted in the work of such contemporary artists as Susan Allen, Robert Collier, Linda Dessaint, Mary Iselin, David Dodge, Gary Custer, Erik Koeppel, Edith Tuttle, John Sirois, Chris Reid, Craig Altobello, Alicia Drakiotes, Martine Villalard-Bohnsack,

Duvall Quigley, *Monadnock*, 12"x17", oil on canvas, accessed August 10, 2023, <https://monadnockart.org/albert-duvall-quigley/>.

³⁸ For example, Meredith Brown, *Moon Over Monadnock*, woodblock, accessed August 10, 2023, <https://nhcrafts.org/webstore/product-tag/mt-monadnock/>; Mary Iselin, *Flock on a December Evening*, oil on canvas, accessed August 10, 2023, <https://maryiselinfineart.com/gallery/monadnocks/>; Alicia Drakiotes, *Monadnock Symphony*, 2016, oil on canvas, accessed on August 10, 2023, <https://pixels.com/featured/2-monadnock-symphony-alicia-drakiotes.html>; Gary Shepard, *Monadnock Afternoon*, 2015, oil on canvas, accessed on August 10, 2023, <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/monadnock-afternoon-gary-shepard.html>; Eleanor Briggs, *Untitled*, photograph, accessed on August 10, 2023, <https://monadnockart.org/author/egriggs/>; Peggy van Valkenburgh, *Untitled*, pastel, *Monadnock Art: Friends of the Dublin Art Colony*, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://monadnockart.org/author/pastelsbypeggy/>.

³⁹ For example, Richard Lonsdale Brown, *Mt. Monadnock*, 1911, gouache on board, 15.38"x19.25", accessed on August 10, 2023, <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/richard-l-brown-1893-1917-mt-monadnock-4-c-71fd0f967a>; Charles Herbert Woodbury, *Monadnock in Winter*, 1912, etching, 6.69"x11.69", Boston Public Library, accessed August 10, 2023, <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:st74d512m>; Rockwell Kent, *Mount Monadnock*, 1903, oil on canvas, 32"x40", The Museum of Fine Arts, Portland, ME, accessed on August 10, 2023, https://arthive.com/rockwellkent/works/480870~Mount_Monadnock; Frederick Rhodes Sisson, *Mount Monadnock*, oil on canvas, 24"x20", artnet, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://www.artnet.com/artists/frederick-rhodes-sisson/mount-monadnock-F2BMPU8OHvbRVZ-ECOuO1w2>; Robert Emmett Owen, *New Hampshire*, oil on canvas, 12"x16", artsy.net, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/robert-emmett-owen-new-hampshire>; Henry Webster Rice, *Mount Monadnock, New Hampshire*, watercolor, 13.25"x19.25", The Cobbs Auctioneers, accessed August 12, 2023, <https://www.thecobbs.com/auction-2018-07-14-lot-275.html>; Charles Curtis Allen, *Mount Monadnock, New Hampshire*, 1940, oil on masonite, 20"x24", Mutual Art, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Mount-Monadnock--New-Hampshire-/811FE56DF98682FDEE108AF264D0B717>.

and Joseph Caracappa.⁴⁰ As a consequence of the continuity of both of these artistic trends, the corpus of Monadnock visual art has become more diverse as its history has progressed.

This trend of increasing diversity that characterizes the history of Monadnock literature and visual art describes also the evolution of the relatively small corpus of musical compositions that the mountain has helped to inspire. Over the course of its history, this corpus has come to comprise traditional and contemporary folk tunes, Western art musical compositions, and contemporary popular songs.

The earliest of this Monadnock music was composed to complement other forms of artistic and recreational engagement with the mountain. For example, T. Bricher's 1852

⁴⁰ For example, Susan Allen, *Untitled*, 21"x25", Monadnock Art: Friends of the Dublin Art Colony, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://monadnockart.org/author/sallen/>; Robert Collier, *Monadnock from Jaffrey Center*, pastel, 6.5"x5", Art3Gallery, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://art3gallery.com/art/robert-colliermonadnock-jaffrey-center/>; Linda Dessaint, *Monadnock Merriment*, 2016, oil on linen, Pixels, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://pixels.com/featured/monadnock-merriment-linda-dessaint.html>; Mary Iselin, *Peace*, 2012, 9"x12", oil on canvas, flickr, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/maryiselin/8063130650/>; David Dodge, *Monadnock from North Pack*, oil on canvas, rubylane, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://www.rubylane.com/item/287526-5627/David-Dodge-Winter-Landscape-Oil-Painting>; Gary R. Custer, *Mount Monadnock from Monadnock Berries*, 7"x5.5", oil on canvas, Gary R. Custer Fine Art, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://www.custer-fineart.com/workzoom/4053066/mount-monadnock-from-monadnock-berries-print#/>; Erik Koeppel, *Mt. Monadnock*, 9"x16", oil on panel, blogspot, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://erikkoepel.blogspot.com/2015/05/mount-monadnock-painting-to-be.html>; Edith Tuttle, *The View from My Studio*, photograph, Monadnock Art: Friends of the Dublin Art Colony, accessed on August 12, 2023, <https://monadnockart.org/author/etuttle/>; John Sirois, *Lakeside Reflection*, 18"x24", oil on canvas, Art3Gallery, accessed on August 14, 2023, <https://art3gallery.com/art/john-sirois-lakeside-reflection/>; Chris Reid, *Landscape*, pastel, Fry Fine art, accessed August 14, 2023, https://www.fryfineart.com/project/minis/?fbclid=IwAR2FjfZc_gyuFIa_Xc0inEYp0ln1QThxNb0FpiBwBkuM5Cn8O9qUZpqXUcw; Craig Altobello, *Mount Monadnock and Dublin Lake*, 11"x14", marquetry wood, Craig Altobello, accessed on August 14, 2023, <https://craigaltobello.com/portfolio/mtmonadnock-and-dublin-lake>; Alicia Drakiotes, *Summer Landscape*, 20"x24", oil on canvas, Alicia Drakiotes Studio, accessed on August 14, 2023, <https://aliciadrakiotes.com/tag/mt-monadnock/>; Martine Villalard-Bohnsack, *Snow on Mount Monadnock*, 4.5"x6.6", pen, twig, and inkwash, Lone Mountain Artists, accessed on August 14, 2023, <https://lonemountainartists.com/artwork-of-martine-villalard-bohnsack/a/>; Joseph Caracappa, *Untitled*, Monadnock Art: Friends of the Dublin Art Colony, accessed on August 14, 2023, <https://monadnockart.org/author/jcaracappa/>.

composition entitled “Monadnock Quick Step” likely accompanied the “quick step”—a form of ballroom dance that became popular in the mid-19th century.⁴¹ W.P. Cushman’s 1884 composition entitled “The Winds that from Monadnock Blow” set to music a popular Monadnock poem by Josiah Canning. A.E. Frinlan’s 1885 composition entitled “Sunset on Lake Monadnock Waltz” and E. Franklin Adams’ 1895 composition “The Monadnock Mountain Waltz for the Piano Forte” likely accompanied the ball dancing of Dublin’s wealthy summer residents.⁴² Finally, F.H. Albee’s “Happy Home”—a song written in 1917 in honor of Monadnock—was likely sung collectively by residents of the Ark Hotel during recreational sojourns to the mountain.⁴³ Thus, the earliest known Monadnock music complemented other forms of engagement with the mountain.

In the mid-20th century, the complementary character of Monadnock music began to wane as the dominant genre of music associated with the mountain shifted from folk and folk dance songs to Western art music compositions. This shift followed from the work of Alan Hovhanness, who sought to give art musical expression to his appreciation of Monadnock and mountains in general. In composing his 1936 fantasy for orchestra entitled “Monadnock” and his Symphony No. 2 entitled “Mysterious Mountain,” Hovhanness sought to convey his understanding of mountains as “symbolic meeting places between the mundane and spiritual worlds.”⁴⁴ Of particular interest to Hovhanness was “the solitary mountain, the tower of strength

⁴¹ Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, 284.

⁴² Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, 288.

⁴³ Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, 288–289.

⁴⁴ Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, 290.

over a countryside—Fujiyama, Ararat, Monadnock, Shasta [and] the Grand Teton.”⁴⁵

Hovhanness’s Monadnock music helped to establish in association with the mountain a legacy of Western art musical composition that comprises such subsequent pieces as Joseph Wagner’s “From the Monadnock Region” (1946), Frederick Koch’s “Monadnock Cadenzas and Variations” (1972), Lloyd Ultan’s “Monadnock Moods for Solo Clarinet” (1982), Larry Siegel’s “Monadnock Tales” (2002), and Paul D. Osterfield’s “Monadnock” (2006).⁴⁶ Unlike earlier Monadnock compositions, these Western art music pieces were composed and meant to be appreciated apart from any other form of engagement with the mountain.

Thus far into the 21st century, a number of compositions have revived the association of Monadnock with music in the folk genres. These compositions are distinct from earlier Monadnock folk music and similar to Monadnock art music in that they have no immediate association with other forms of artistic or recreational engagement with the mountain. Among these compositions are The Stillhouse Jammers’ 2008 bluegrass tune entitled “Monadnock Trail” and Natalie Merchant’s 2009 composition entitled “Indian Names,” the final verse of which includes a reference to Monadnock.⁴⁷ As a consequence of both the persistent popularity of early genres of Monadnock music and the introduction of new genres of music in association with the

⁴⁵ Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, 290.

⁴⁶ Joseph Wagner, “From the Monadnock Region: for piano” (Verona: Seesaw Music Corp., 1946); Frederick Koch’s “Monadnock Cadenzas and Variations” (Verona: Seesaw Music Corp., 1972); Lloyd Ultan’s “Monadnock Moods for Solo Clarinet” (Ham Lake: Jeanne Music Publications, 1982); Lawrence Siegel, “Monadnock Tales,” lyrics by Edie Clark, Colonial Theatre, Keene, NH, May 12, 2002; Paul D. Osterfield, “Monadnock” (North Hampton: Navona Records, 2006).

⁴⁷ The Stillhouse Jammers, “Monadnock Trail,” (Framingham: Joe Val Bluegrass Festival, Sheraton Framingham Hotel, February 15-17, 2008; Natalie Merchant, “Indian Names,” track 13 on disc 2 of *Leave Your Sleep* (New York: Nonesuch Records, 2009).

mountain, the history of Monadnock musical composition has followed the trend of increasing diversity that characterizes the evolution of Monadnock literature and visual art.

Finally, Monadnock has long inspired the development and the performance of a small but significant corpus of choreography. While some Monadnock choreography is particular to the geography of the mountain itself, other Monadnock choreography was developed for performance in any location. The earliest known reference to dance in association with the mountain appears in a letter of Henry David Thoreau written in 1860 in which Thoreau recalls learning from an older companion about a past experience of dancing with a group of people on the summit of Monadnock.⁴⁸ Later in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the composition of aforementioned folk dance music in association with Monadnock indicates the performance of such dances as the quick step and the waltz at locations apart from the mountain itself. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the work of professional and amateur dancers revived the early 19th century practice of dancing on Monadnock. The resurgence of this practice follows principally from the work of Dianne Eno—a professional choreographer from Keene who established in 1985 the Mount Monadnock Celebration of Dance—a now annual tradition of professional dance performance on the summit of Monadnock.⁴⁹ During the first of these dance performances, a Morris dance group known as “Jack in the Green Morris Men” performed in Monadnock State Park a Morris dance by Bill Thomas called “The Flowers of Monadnock.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Henry David Thoreau, “Letter Forty-Eight, November 4, 1860,” in *Henry David Thoreau: Letters to a Spiritual Seeker*, ed. Bradley P. Dean (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 2004), 186–191.

⁴⁹ Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, 290.

⁵⁰ Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, 303.

Like Eno's practice of dance on the summit, the performance of this composition in the State Park and later on the summit of Pack Monadnock became an annual means of paying tribute to "the sacred mountain."⁵¹ Thus, the evolution of Monadnock choreography has followed the trend of increasing diversity that characterizes the development of literature, visual art, and music in association with the mountain.

In the course of its long human cultural history, Monadnock has gained association with an ample and ever expanding corpus of artistic invention. As the number of compositions that this corpus comprises has increased, so too has the diversity of the corpus overall. While consisting principally of a small number of literary and visual artistic compositions, Monadnock art has come to encompass a broad variety of literary, visual artistic, musical, and choreographic inventions. Thus, the trend of increasing diversity has come to characterize both the genre composition of Monadnock art in general and the artistic inventions that each of these genres comprises.

Critical Reception of Monadnock Art

On account of the significance of the artists and the artistic compositions that are associated with Monadnock, the corpus of Monadnock art has gained ample attention in a variety of secondary media that includes academic and popular literature, lectures and presentations, and exhibitions and performances. All of these media presume established explanations of Monadnock's artistic appeal. While academic media presumes a constructivist attribution of the mountain's appeal to human cultural invention, popular media presumes an essentialist

⁵¹ Brandon, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, 304.

attribution of the mountain's appeal to a kind of power that inheres in the mountain itself.

Although they follow from distinct presumptive explanations, academic and popular media alike lack thoroughgoing critical analysis of the particular explanation that they presume.

Purpose of the Study

This study serves the principal purpose of filling this lacuna in the secondary media that addresses Monadnock art. Thus, the research design that guided the processes of gathering and interpreting data on artistic invention in association with Monadnock follows from a primary interest in discovering how and why Monadnock inspires artistic invention and how the work of artistic invention, in turn, conditions artists' appreciation of the mountain. In addition to the primary interest of revealing the appeal of Monadnock as a place in association with which to create art, this study presumes a secondary interest in revealing the artistic appeal of places in general and the influence of artistic invention in association with places upon artists' appreciation of the places in association with which they create art.

Research Design

The work of fulfilling these research interests requires a research approach that discloses rudimentary dimensions of the artist's lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock; for, only by exposing and interpreting the lived experiential dynamics of Monadnock artists is it possible to undermine unsubstantiated essentialist and constructivist explanations of Monadnock's artistic appeal and thus to discover both how the mountain gains association with artistic invention and how this work of artistic invention, in turn, conditions appreciation of the mountain. These interests align most closely with an hermeneutic phenomenological research approach. Based upon the work of German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, such an approach addresses a rudimentary kind of understanding as a property of lived

experience and thus discloses the ways in which such understanding both conditions and proceeds from the lived experience that it constitutes.⁵²

On the one hand, an hermeneutic phenomenological research design has the potential to reveal the appeal of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. This potential follows from the attention that hermeneutic phenomenology affords to the dynamics of lived experience.⁵³ Rather than presuming the validity of established ways of knowing in the manner of essentialist and constructivist research approaches, hermeneutic phenomenology discloses the lived experiential basis of knowing in general.⁵⁴ Based upon the processes of gathering and interpreting empirical data, hermeneutic phenomenological research furnishes fresh perspectives that might confirm or undermine established ways of knowing.⁵⁵ Therefore, hermeneutic phenomenological research on artistic invention in association with Monadnock has the potential to disclose the lived experience of Monadnock artists and thus to reveal how and why the mountain has come to gain association with such an ample corpus of artistic invention.

On the other hand, hermeneutic phenomenology has the potential to reveal the ways in which the work of artistic invention in association with Monadnock conditions the artist's

⁵² K.M. Suddick, V. Cross, P. Vuoskoski, K.T. Galvin, and G. Stew, "The Work of Hermeneutic Phenomenology," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920947600>.

⁵³ Doris Elida Fuster Guillen, "Qualitative Research: Hermeneutical Phenomenological Method," *Propositos y Representaciones* 7, no. 1 (2019): 201–229.

⁵⁴ Ethel A. Santiago, Cynthia Brown, Rita Mahmoud, and Joan Carlisle, "Hermeneutic Phenomenological Human Science Research Method in Clinical Practice Settings: An Integrative Literature Review," *Nurse Education in Practice* 47 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2020.102837>.

⁵⁵ Arthur Sloan and Brian Bowe, "Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology: the Philosophy, the Methodologies and Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate Lecturers' Experiences of Curriculum Design," *Quality and Quantity*, 48, no. 3 (2014): 1291–1303.

appreciation of the mountain. This potential follows from the ontological philosophy of Heidegger and Gadamer. In opposition to their transcendental forerunners in the field of phenomenology who distinguished lived experience from preconceived ways of knowing, Heidegger and Gadamer both identified such ways of knowing as features of being in the world.⁵⁶ Thus, hermeneutic phenomenological research seeks not to bracket established ways of knowing in the manner of transcendental phenomenological research, but rather to discern the ways in which established ways of knowing both condition and follow from lived experience.⁵⁷ Since the artist's appreciation of Monadnock is an established way of knowing that both inspires and proceeds from the invention of Monadnock art, hermeneutic phenomenological research has the potential to disclose the influence of Monadnock artistic invention upon the artist's appreciation of the mountain.

By fulfilling these primary interests, hermeneutic phenomenological research on artistic invention in association with Monadnock might reveal by extension the artistic appeal of places in general and the ways in which artistic invention in association with places influences artists' appreciation of the places in association with which they produce art. These general conclusions that might be drawn from research on artistic invention in association with Monadnock might prompt further research on artistic invention in association with place in general.

⁵⁶ Sloan and Bowe, "Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy, The Methodologies and Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate Lecturers' Experiences of Curriculum Design," 1294.

⁵⁷ Susan M. Lavery, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2, no. 3 (2003): 24.

Results and Implications

The work of conducting and interpreting hermeneutic phenomenological interviews with four Monadnock artists revealed a lived experiential process that artists undergo as they produce art in association with Monadnock. This process consists of the following five experiential phases: first encounter, abstract appreciation, existential understanding, sustained attention, and continuity. As Monadnock artists progress through each of these phases, their appreciation of the mountain evolves gradually from an understanding of the mountain as other to a sense of existential reciprocity with the mountain.

This experiential process of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, in turn, pertains principally to essential concepts in the field of environmental aesthetics. In particular, this process accords with Arnold Berleant's concept of engagement. In accordance with the practice of hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation, the work of understanding Monadnock artistic invention in conjunction with this concept of engagement is a circular process of interpreting each from the standpoint of the other and thus developing an understanding of each that complements the other.⁵⁸ As the work of interpreting artistic invention in association with Monadnock from the standpoint of engagement revealed an environmental aesthetic experiential process, so the work of interpreting engagement from the standpoint of artistic invention in association with Monadnock revealed the ways in which the dualism of established ways of knowing inhibits conscious awareness of the continuity that defines engagement and indicated

⁵⁸ Ronald Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1996), 2.

the possibility for artistic invention in association with place to undermine dualistic established ways of knowing and thus to prompt conscious awareness of continuity with environment.

This possibility, in turn, has significant implications for ecological ontological thought in the environmental humanities. Scholars in various humanities fields who promote an ecological understanding of being generally identify in the Western cultural tradition an ontological division between mind and matter and between humans and the rest of the material world as the origins of contemporary ecological crisis. Remediation of this crisis, they argue, requires revision of the dominant Western ways of thinking about the human condition in relation to the rest of the empirical world. In opposition to the distinctions that the Western cultural tradition imagines between humans and the world and by extension between the mental and physical domains of human being, these scholars have proposed ontologies that situate human existence within the matrix of biotic relationships that sustain life in all of its forms and have drawn attention to the corporeal dimensions of human thought. While these scholars have helped to undermine Western ontological division and to promote an ecological understanding of being, they have also reinforced in a subtle manner the ontological division that they oppose by presuming the primacy of intellectual activity among the many factors that condition human being in the world. As many of these scholars themselves observe, this assumption of the primacy of intellectual activity follows from the Western ontological distinction between the processes of the mind and the body. Since the intellectual medium of conveying ecological ontologies, therefore, reinforces the division that such ontology opposes, the work of implementing ecological ontologies—of coming to know ourselves as unified beings who are of the world that we inhabit—requires practical measures that might subvert the hegemony of established intellectual modes of being in the world. To the extent that the practice of artistic invention in association with place

undermines the dualism of established ways of knowing and prompts a conscious sense of continuity with place, this practice can serve as a means of implementing an ecological understanding of being that might help to remediate contemporary ecological crisis.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

As a consequence of the variety and the interdisciplinary reach of the research interests that motivated this study and the results and implications that it yielded, the corpus of literature to which this study pertains is diverse in terms of academic discipline and compositional style. The corpus of literature that addresses the ecological implications of this study comprises academic articles and monographs written by scholars working in the fields of philosophy, theology, history, physics, and biology. The literature that addresses Berleant's concept of engagement, in turn, belongs to the field of environmental aesthetics. Finally, the corpus of literature that addresses the artistic appeal of Monadnock consists of academic and popular books and articles written in the fields of natural history, cultural history, and human geography. Thus, a diversity of literature addresses the phenomenon of artistic invention in association with Monadnock and its aesthetic and ontological implications.

In each of these bodies of literature, there are limitations, most of which are tangential to the scope of the literature itself, that this study helps to remedy. These limitations consist of lacunae or points of ambiguity either in the theoretical content of the literature itself or in the application of this content in a practical setting. Literature that critiques Western ontological division and proposes an ecological ontology, for example, lacks discussion of any practical means of challenging the persistent influence of ontological division and of thus incorporating into lived experience an ecological sense of being. In a similar manner, literature on aesthetic engagement lacks sufficient explanation of how to subvert the dualism of established ways of knowing and thus to develop a conscious awareness of the experiential unity of environmental aesthetic appreciation. Finally, literature on Monadnock lacks thoroughgoing critical analysis of

the essentialist and constructivist explanations of the mountain's artistic appeal that this literature presumes. Hence, each genre of literature that is pertinent to artistic invention in association with Monadnock has its own particular set of limitations that this study helps to overcome.

In what follows, I will review literature in each of these genres in the interest of illuminating lacunae or points of ambiguity that this study helps to resolve. In accordance with a deductive compositional structure, this review will progress from addressing the most general of pertinent issues to addressing progressively more specific pertinent issues. Thus, I will proceed from reviewing literature on Western ontological division to reviewing literature on aesthetic engagement, and I will conclude by reviewing literature on the artistic appeal of Monadnock. While the deductive structure of this review opposes the inductive process that I used to conduct research, this deductive structure conveys in a coherent manner the meaning that my research disclosed.

The Division of Being in the History of Western Culture

Since the advent of the environmental humanities in the 1960s, scholars have come to identify Western ontology as the basis of contemporary human-environment interaction in places of Western cultural influence. These scholars have focused upon a tendency in Western culture to divide ontology into multiple categories and to understand each of these categories in isolation from all others. This focus has inspired a corpus of literature that addresses the division of human being into the categories of mind and body and the division of the world at large into the categories of human and environment. In spite of their common focus, scholars in the environmental humanities have attributed the origin of ontological division to various developments in Western cultural history. While some scholars have attributed this division to the abstraction of the ancient Greek intellectual tradition, others have discovered its origin in the

birth and diffusion of Christianity, and others still have found its basis in the dualism of the Modern European intellectual or economic tradition.

In the field of environmental philosophy, a number of scholars have attributed ontological division to various developments in the intellectual tradition of ancient Greece. Thus, David Abram, Arne Naess, Henryk Skolimowski, and Val Plumwood all argue that particular moments in the evolution of ancient Greek culture effectively fragmented being into multiple categories that came to be understood and valued differently.

David Abram and Arne Naess attribute Western ontological division to certain developments in the lexical semantics of ancient Greece. On the one hand, Abram addresses this division as a consequence of the ancient Greek appropriation of the semitic alphabet and the resulting abstraction of language from its basis in the elements of the empirical world. He observes that unlike the pictographic letters of the semitic alphabet, the names and shapes of which identify objects in the material world, the phonetic letters of the Greek alphabet identify nothing other than the speech sounds with which they are associated. Thus, he argues, the Greek alphabet severed the semitic connection between language and matter and initiated “the progressive abstraction of linguistic meaning from the enveloping life-world.”¹ On the other hand, Arne Naess identifies as the basis of this division the different ways of knowing that followed from the classical terms “logos” and “sophia.” He observes that the term “logos” conveys “a scientific ethic of respect for the norms of impartiality” and that this ethic guides the

¹ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage, 1997), 101.

pursuit of knowledge in such fields as biology, anthropology, and geology.² He observes that the term “sophia” denotes “acquaintance, ... understanding, [and a] valuation of life” that guides the pursuit of knowledge in philosophy.³ These ways of knowing gave rise to the assumption that ontology can be divided into various dimensions and each of these dimensions can be understood in isolation from all others. Thus, Abram and Naess discover the source of Western ontological division in the language of ancient Greece.

In contrast to the lexical explanations of Abram and Naess, various authors attribute the division of ontology in the West to developments in the ancient Greek philosophical tradition. Henryk Skolimowski identifies the Socratic tradition as the origin of a divided understanding of being. Based upon the distinction that he observes between the holism of pre-Socratic philosophers and the anthropocentrism of Socrates and his successors, Skolimowski concludes that “when Socrates and Plato came on the scene, a fundamental shift occurred in philosophy—cosmology ceased to be the centre of philosophical concern and, instead, the philosophy of man became the focus.”⁴ This shift gave rise to positivist, scientific approach to understanding the world that effectively isolated the being of humanity from the being of the cosmos. More specifically, Arthur Lovejoy and Val Plumwood attribute Western ontological division to the ideal of the otherworldly in the philosophy of Plato. Both authors argue that this ideal not only

² Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*. Translated by David Rothenberg. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 37.

³ Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, 37.

⁴ Henryk Skolimowski, *Living Philosophy: Eco-Philosophy as a Tree of Life* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 8.

divided human beings from the world, as Skolimowski observes, but established a hierarchical distinction between the immaterial and the material dimensions of human being. Lovejoy attributes to Platonic philosophy both a “sense of the separation of man from the rest of the animal creation” and a distinction between human existential categories that he calls “otherworldliness” and “this-worldliness.”⁵ He defines “otherworldliness” as “the belief that both the genuinely ‘real’ and the truly good are radically antithetic in their essential characteristics to anything to be found in man’s natural life”—that is, in the domain of this world.⁶ Ultimately, he identifies this distinction as the origin of a “dualistic theory of human nature” that would become “one of the ruling conceptions in Western thought.”⁷ In accordance with Lovejoy, Plumwood observes in the philosophy of Plato “a hyperseparation between the real self and the body.”⁸ While the real self is the soul, which “is aligned with the immaterial and divine order,” the body is aligned “with the inferior material order of nature.”⁹ She identifies Plato’s divided ontology as “the first developed and enduring statement in western history of the otherworldly principles which have dominated so much of the history of western thought.”¹⁰ Finally, Rosemary Radford Ruether attributes ontological dualism to the combined influence of Plato and Aristotle. She identifies Plato’s creation story as the origin of “the primal ontological dualism of mind and matter” and Aristotle’s *Politics* as the basis of a hierarchical relational

⁵ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 231, 24.

⁶ Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 25.

⁷ Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 198.

⁸ Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 89.

⁹ Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 89.

¹⁰ Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 89.

understanding.¹¹ She notes that “the form/matter dualism for Aristotle defines the relationship of men to women, masters to slaves, Greeks to Barbarians, (male) humans to animals and finally (male) humans to the use of tools.”¹² Thus, various scholars have discovered in the ancient Greek philosophical tradition the origin of a divided understanding of being in the West.

In various fields of inquiry, scholars have attributed Western ontological division to the birth and diffusion of Christianity. Such scholars as Lynn White, Jr., William Leiss, and Wendell Berry identify either Christian theological tenets or the implications that follow from them as bases of a divided sense of being in the West. Lynn White, Jr. attributes ontological division to the development of Western Christianity during the Middle Ages. In a famous article entitled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” White, Jr. argues that the decline of a traditional, natural theological understanding of nature as a medium of God’s communication and the rise of a new, mechanistic understanding of nature as an expression of God’s mind inspired scientific and technological development that sharpened in the dogma of Western Christianity an ontological “dualism of man and nature.”¹³ Leiss, in turn, attributes this dualism to Christian accounts of the human condition that are rooted in the cosmogony of the Hebrew scriptures. He observes that “the creation story in the Book of Genesis announces the sovereignty of God over the universe and the derivative authority of man over the living creatures on the earth.”¹⁴ He

¹¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Dualism and the Nature of Evil in Feminist Theology,” *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 5, no. 1 (1992), 27.

¹² Ruether, “Dualism and the Nature of Evil in Feminist Theology,” 28–29.

¹³ Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science*, 155, no. 3767 (1967), 1205.

¹⁴ William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), 31.

goes on to note that “this element of power ... essentially separates man from other created things.”¹⁵ This sense of separation and the power that it presumes, he argues, gained confirmation during the 17th century when the development of modern science and technology increased human domination of the natural world. Finally, Berry attributes ontological dualism to the influence of industrialism upon the development of modern Christianity. Berry argues that industrialism introduced an exploitative economics that subordinated the material world to the principle of personal, monetary gain. Under the influence of this perspective, he argues, Christians came to assume a “dualism of body and soul” that “manifests itself in several ways; it is a cleavage, a radical discontinuity between Creator and creature, spirit and matter, religion and nature, religion and economy, worship and work, etc.”¹⁶ Thus, various scholars have identified either the birth or development of Christianity as the locus of ontological division in Western culture.

Various scholars have attributed ontological division to developments in the Modern European intellectual tradition. In direct opposition to the idea that religion gave rise to ontological dualism, David Ehrenfeld identifies the declining influence of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and the consequent development of humanism as the locus of an imagined distinction between humanity and the world. He argues that the increased influence of the doctrine of final causes during the Scientific Revolution inspired the belief that God created the natural world solely to benefit humanity. “It only remained to diminish the role of God,” he continues, “and we

¹⁵ Leiss, *The Domination of Nature*, 31.

¹⁶ Wendell Berry, “Christianity and the Survival of Creation,” *Cross Currents* 3, no. 2 (1993), 157.

arrived at full-fledged humanism.”¹⁷ To this humanism he attributes a “dichotomy of humanity and nature.”¹⁸ Carolyn Merchant, in turn, identifies the mechanistic philosophy of 17th century France as the origin of a distinction between humanity and the world. Principally in the writings of Mersenne, Gassendi, and Descartes, she observes the emergence of a “mechanical view of nature” as “a system of dead, inert particles.”¹⁹ This mechanistic understanding of the world, she argues, established between the domains of mind and body a distinction that came to eclipse the holistic integrity of earlier perspectives. “A new concept of the self as a rational master of the passions housed in a machinelike body,” she argues, “began to replace the concept of the self as an integral part of a close-knit harmony of organic parts united to the cosmos and society.”²⁰ Finally, Fritjof Capra, Andreas Weber, and Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam attribute ontological dualism more specifically to the philosophy of Descartes. Capra argues that “mind-body dualism” followed from “Descartes’ celebrated statement ‘*Cogito, ergo sum*,’” which, he argues, “forcefully encouraged Western individuals to equate their identity with their rational mind rather than with their whole organism” and thus established a “division between mind and body.”²¹ In accordance with both Capra and Merchant, Weber attributes to Cartesian dualism a mechanistic understanding of nature that established “a rigid separation of the human dimension

¹⁷ David W. Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 8.

¹⁸ Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism*, 11.

¹⁹ Carolyn Merchant, *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982), 193.

²⁰ Merchant, *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, 214.

²¹ Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 40.

from the rest of life.”²² Finally, Kureethadam attributes to the philosophy of Descartes “an exaggerated anthropocentrism, a mechanistic conception of the natural world, and the metaphysical dualism between humanity and the rest of the physical world.”²³ Thus, various scholars have traced ontological division to the developments in the Modern European intellectual tradition.

In a similar manner, contemporary environmental humanists attribute ontological division to the Modern European intellectual tradition; however, they address this tradition in conjunction with the economic and the political history that has complemented and reinforced it. For example, Adrian Parr draws attention to the connections between “the hierarchical organization of human/nonhuman” and “the exploitative and oppressive system of global capitalism.”²⁴ In a similar manner, the interdependence of the content and the structure of Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt’s anthology of essays entitled *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* draws attention by contrast to the destructive “entrenched hierarchies of Western colonialism and industrial capitalism, steeped as they are in individualism, anthropocentrism, and progress.”²⁵ Thus, the anthology reveals the mutual contingency of divisive, individualistic ontologies and the history of political and economic exploitation that

²² Andreas Weber, *The Biology of Wonder: Aliveness, Feeling, and the Metamorphosis of Science* (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2016), 10.

²³ Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, *The Philosophical Roots of the Ecological Crisis: Descartes and the Modern Worldview* (New Castle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 5.

²⁴ Adrian Parr, *Earthlings: Imaginative Encounters in the Natural World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 4, 128.

²⁵ Amelia Moore, “Book Review: Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan and Nils Bubandt, eds., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25, no. 3: 627–628.

threatens our contemporary world. In a similar manner, Donna J. Haraway discerns the origin of the contemporary crises that afflict humanity and the environment in the various human institutions that presume and perpetuate Modern individualism. Thus, she finds fault not only with “bounded individualism,” but also “its many flavors in science, politics, and philosophy.”²⁶ In this manner, contemporary environmental humanists blur the neat distinction that earlier environmental humanists observed between intellectual presuppositions and the human institutions that follow from them.

While arguments about the division of being in the history of Western culture address different intellectual historical developments and propose various accounts of the nature of Western ontological division, they all affirm a common argument according to which contemporary Western culture promotes a divided ontology—one that separates the immaterial from the material dimensions of being. Further, these arguments all attribute to this divided ontology an imagined isolation of the being of humans from the being of the rest of the world and a related segregation of the supposedly immaterial and material dimensions of human being. Thus, the division of ontology in the West has come to gain the attention of scholars in the environmental humanities who address it as the basis of contemporary human-environment interaction.

The Trouble with a Divided Understanding of Being

²⁶ Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 5.

Nearly all of these scholars conceive of this ontological division as the intellectual cornerstone of a basic ecological problem—a problem, that is, in the relational dynamics of the world’s inhabitants. According to these scholars, ontological division buttresses a number of concomitant suppositions such as the distinction between mind and matter, the identity of human beings principally with the domain of mind, and the segregation of humanity from the rest of the world that inflict harm by valuing the interests of human beings above both the welfare of other species and the perpetuity of the conditions that sustain life in general. All of these scholars agree, therefore, that ontological division threatens the welfare of humanity and the environment alike, and they all propose ways of thinking that are meant to undermine the principles associated with ontological division and to encourage an ecological understanding of being. Nonetheless, the work of these authors presumes a diversity of primary concerns. While the work of some authors follows from anthropological concerns, the work of other authors supposes environmental concerns, and the work of others still presumes dovetailed concerns about humans and the environment alike.

The Division of Being as a Detriment to Human Welfare

Authors whose work follows principally from anthropological concerns identify ontological division as a detriment to human welfare and propose ecological ontologies as means of promoting human flourishing. In spite of this general point of agreement, these authors address from the standpoint of different principal concerns the harm that ontological division inflicts upon human beings. As a consequence, the ecological ontologies that they propose address different dimensions of human welfare. While some authors address ontological division as a detriment to human social dynamics and propose an ecological ontology as a means of promoting a kind of social stability, others address such division as a detriment to the lived

experience of individuals and propose an ecological ontology as a means of expanding the horizons and the significance of lived human experience of the material world.

Authors who identify ontological division as a threat to human social dynamics argue that ontological distinctions between humanity and the environment provoke human conflict, and these authors propose ecological ontologies as means to achieve human social stability. Leiss, for example, argues that the ontological division underlying human efforts to dominate the natural world has the potential to exacerbate in a paradoxical manner the very conflict that such domination was meant to diminish. If “the conquest of nature is regarded as the enlargement of human power over nature ... for the purpose of satisfying material wants,” he observes, then “mastery over nature inevitably turns into mastery over men and the intensification of social conflict.”²⁷ Thus, “a vicious cycle results,” he argues, “imprisoning science and technology in a fateful dialectic of increasing mastery and increasing conflict,” and “the attractive promises of mastery over nature—social peace and material abundance for all—remain unfulfilled.”²⁸ In opposition to this vicious cycle and the ontological division that underlies it, Leiss promotes a revised understanding of the relationship between humans and nature according to which nature “ceases to be regarded primarily as a source of power” and “become[s] instead the wellspring of happiness.”²⁹ For Leiss, therefore, an ecological understanding of being has the potential to undermine the divisive ontological presuppositions that provoke human conflict and thus to promote human flourishing.

²⁷ Leiss, *The Domination of Nature*, 194.

²⁸ Leiss, *The Domination of Nature*, 194.

²⁹ Leiss, *The Domination of Nature*, 197.

Authors who conceive of ontological division as a detriment to the integrity of lived human experience argue that ontological distinctions between mind and matter and between humanity and the material world harm human beings by inhibiting our awareness of the conditions that define our humanity, and these authors propose ecological ontologies as means of promoting an holistic sense of human being. Abram, for example, argues that ontological division has led to the abstraction of thought from human sensory experience, and this abstraction has discouraged a kind of empirical awareness that is essential to human welfare. As a consequence of ontological division, he argues, contemporary humans have come to “participate almost exclusively with other humans and with our own human-made technologies.”³⁰ Based upon the premise that “humans are tuned for relationship,” which sensory experience mediates with the more-than-human world, and that “we are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human,” he identifies contemporary human isolation from empirical reality as “a precarious situation” in which humans “have no distance from our technologies, no way of assessing their limitations, no way to keep ourselves from turning into them.”³¹ Thus, he promotes the renewal of an embodied ontology that recognizes the primacy of human sensory experience and establishes again a sense of dynamic interaction with the more-than-human world. Thus, Abram argues that an ecological awareness that benefits the world has the potential to undermine the ontological division that inhibits human flourishing.

³⁰ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, ix.

³¹ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, ix–x.

Authors whose opposition to ontological division follows principally from anthropological concerns propose ecological ontologies as a means of promoting human flourishing. Thus, they conceive of being in a way that benefits the environment as a means of promoting human welfare.

The Division of Being as a Detriment to the Environment

Conversely, authors whose work follows principally from environmental concerns identify ontological division as a detriment to the world's ecosystems and propose an ecological understanding of the human condition as a means of remediating environmental degradation. In spite of this general point of agreement, however, these authors attribute ontological division to various dimensions of Western culture. As a consequence, the ecological understanding of being that they propose follows from revision of a variety of cultural loci. In an effort to encourage environmental remediation, therefore, some authors attribute ontological division to Western Christianity and thus work to revise dominant Christian ontologies while others attribute such division to Western philosophy and work to revise philosophical ontologies.

Authors who conceive of environmental degradation as a consequence of divisive Christian ontologies draw attention to the ecological dimensions of Christian accounts of being as a means of encouraging environmental remediation. White, Jr., for example, argues that the work of combating ecological crisis requires revision of the divisive Western Christian ontology that causes environmental degradation. He argues that Christianity—"the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen"—"destroy[ed] pagan animism" and thus "made it possible to exploit

nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.”³² Based upon his argument that the roots of contemporary environmental degradation “are so largely religious,” White, Jr. argues that “the remedy must also be essentially religious.”³³ As a means of combating ecological crisis, therefore, he proposes “an alternative Christian view” based upon St. Francis’s “idea of the equality of all creatures.”³⁴ Like White, Jr., Berry attributes ontological division to Christianity; however, in opposition to White, Jr.’s argument that such division inheres in the tradition of Western Christianity, Berry identifies this division as a contemporary aberration from traditional Christian doctrine. He argues that environmental degradation presumes an understanding of human beings “as lofty souls entrapped temporarily in lowly bodies in a dispirited, desperate, unlovable world that we must despise for Heaven’s sake,” and he encourages contemporary Christians to conceive of “work as a form of prayer” that “connects us both to Creation and to eternity” and thus to challenge exploitative economics and the ontological division that they presume.³⁵ Nonetheless, for White, Jr. and Berry alike, contemporary ecological crisis follows from divisive Christian ontologies and thus demands increased awareness of the ecological dimensions of Christian teachings.

Authors who identify divisive Western philosophical ontologies as a principal source of environmental degradation propose ecological, philosophical accounts of being as a means of combating environmental degradation. Naess, for example, attributes to Western philosophy “a

³² White, Jr. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” 1205.

³³ White, Jr. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” 1207.

³⁴ White, Jr. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” 1207.

³⁵ Berry, “Christianity and the Survival of Creation,” 159–160.

distorted attitude to life” that has given rise to a “global culture of a primarily techno-industrial nature [which] is now encroaching upon all the world’s milieux, desecrating living conditions for future generations.”³⁶ In opposition to this culture and the philosophical principles that underlie it, Naess encourages a “change in consciousness” that “consists of a transition to a more egalitarian attitude to life and the unfolding of life on Earth. This transition,” he continues, “opens the doors to a richer and more satisfying life for the species *Homo sapiens*, but not by focusing on *Homo sapiens*.”³⁷ Weber, in turn, conceives of ontological division as an expression of the mechanistic philosophy that gave rise to Modern science, and he argues that environmental remediation requires scientific acknowledgement of subjectivity as an essential feature of life. Weber argues that environmental degradation presumes a “deep ethical misunderstanding of ourselves as a species detached from all other life forms” (339) and he attributes this misunderstanding to the mistaken assumptions that “feeling and experience” are “human add-ons to an otherwise meaningless biosphere” and that non-human organisms are “clocks assembled from discrete, mechanical pieces.”³⁸ Environmental remediation, he argues, demands a “poetic ecology” that undermines the mechanistic assumptions of Modern science and the philosophy that it presumes by addressing human beings as organisms who “know what is good for other organisms,” who “feel and ... can be united with other feeling beings,” and who “live as agents of imaginative change and are allowed to take imagination seriously.”³⁹ In

³⁶ Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, 25, 23.

³⁷ Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, 91.

³⁸ Weber, *The Biology of Wonder: Aliveness, Feeling, and the Metamorphosis of Science*, 339, 2.

³⁹ Weber, *The Biology of Wonder: Aliveness, Feeling, and the Metamorphosis of Science*, 340.

accordance with Naess, White, Jr., and Berry, therefore, Weber addresses ontological division as a principal cause of environmental degradation, and he proposes an ecological ontology as a means of environmental remediation.

Authors whose opposition to ontological division follows primarily from environmental concerns propose ecological ontologies as means of encouraging environmental remediation. Thus, they conceive of ways of being that are beneficial to human beings as a means of promoting the welfare of the environment.

The Division of Being as a Detriment to Humans and the Environment

Finally, a number of authors address explicitly the reciprocity of human and environmental welfare that is implied in the work of authors who prioritize anthropological and environmental concerns. Authors who fall into this third category affirm a common supposition that ontological division degrades humanity and the environment in a coordinated manner, and these authors propose ecological ontologies that afford equal priority to the welfare of human beings and the environment. Nonetheless, these authors offer various accounts of the harm that ontological division inflicts upon human beings, and therefore, they tailor their ecological ontologies to address different anthropological concerns. While some of these authors argue that ontological division harms all human beings in a common way and to an equal extent and thus propose ecological ontologies that presume a monolithic understanding of the human condition, others of these authors address ontological division as an injustice that harms different groups of people in different ways, and these authors propose ecological ontologies that empower the demographic groups that ontological division has afflicted most severely.

Authors whose opposition to ontological division follows from dovetailed concerns about the environment and the welfare of humanity in general propose ecological ontologies to

undermine those consequences of ontological division that threaten in a more or less uniform manner the welfare of the environment and the whole of humanity. Ehrenfeld, for example, identifies related Western humanist distinctions between reason and emotion and between humanity and the world as harmful at once to humanity and the environment, and he encourages a synthesis of these distinctions for the purpose of promoting the welfare of humanity and the environment. He argues that ontological division harms humanity by prioritizing reason and thus blinding us to the irrational experience that underlies rational thought. The “desperate and selfish attempt to make all modern decisions ‘rational’ and ‘objective,’” he argues, “leaves us severely handicapped in the most critical areas of survival, and has the paradoxical effect of insuring that the only emotions that will help decide our future are the hidden ones too base for public view.”⁴⁰ In an equally grave manner, argues Ehrenfeld, ontological division harms the environment by subordinating conservation efforts to the standard of rational justification. The “humanistic world,” he argues, “accepts the conservation of Nature only piecemeal and at a price: there must be a *logical, practical* reason for saving each and every part of the natural world that we wish to preserve.”⁴¹ This rational basis of conservation efforts, he argues, becomes harmful “on the increasingly frequent occasions when we encounter a threatened part of Nature but can find no rational reason for keeping it.”⁴² In the interest of promoting the welfare of humanity and the environment alike, therefore, Ehrenfeld argues that “a peaceful synthesis is

⁴⁰ Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism*, 168.

⁴¹ Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism*, 177.

⁴² Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism*, 177.

also possible at times, and must be nurtured, encouraged, and practiced.”⁴³ In a similar manner, Capra identifies ontological division as the basis of a kind of rationalism that harms humanity and the environment in a complementary manner, and he proposes an ecological ontology in an effort to undermine ontological division and its destructive consequences. In opposition to “the feeling of physical, psychological, and spiritual integrity” that defines human “experience of feeling healthy,” he argues, ontological division has inspired a “fragmented, mechanistic world view that has become all-pervasive,” and this worldview has “led to a profound cultural imbalance and [has] generated numerous symptoms of ill health.”⁴⁴ Further, he attributes to this worldview “excessive technological growth” that “is severely disrupting and upsetting the ecological processes that sustain our natural environment.”⁴⁵ In lieu of ontological division, Capra proposes a “new vision of reality” that is “based on an awareness of the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena—physical, biological, psychological, social, and cultural.”⁴⁶ In accordance with Ehrenfeld and Capra, Skolimowski argues that ontological division harms humanity and the environment by neglecting and reciprocity of their welfare, and he proposes an ecological ontology that integrates the concerns of ecology and humanism. Skolimowski argues that ontological division produces in humanity a “contemporary [sense of] alienation” that presumes “a mistaken conception of the universe in which everything

⁴³ Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism*, 170.

⁴⁴ Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture*, 234.

⁴⁵ Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture*, 235.

⁴⁶ Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture*, 249.

is separated and divided and in which the human is likewise atomized and ‘torn.’”⁴⁷ Further, he attributes to ontological division a “ruthless, exploitative mechanistic paradigm which has wreaked so much havoc on world ecology.”⁴⁸ In opposition to the harm that ontological division inflicts upon humanity and the world, Skolimowski proposes “the return of the unitary view in which the philosophy of man and the philosophy of nature are aspects of each other.”⁴⁹ Like Ehrenfeld and Capra, therefore, Skolimowski proposes an ecological ontology for the purpose of combating the harm that ontological dualism inflicts upon humanity and the environment in general.

Other authors conceive of humanity and the environment as polythetic categories comprising subcategories that ontological division affects in various ways, and these authors propose ecological ontologies that promote the welfare of the demographic groups and environments that ontological division harms most significantly. Merchant, for example, identifies ontological division as a source of human social and environmental injustice, and she proposes an ecological ontology for the purpose of remediating the harm that ontological division inflicts upon the people and the environments that it represses. She observes that “our current environmental dilemma and its connections to science, technology, and the economy” follow from “a world view and a science that, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women.”⁵⁰ In opposition to

⁴⁷ Skolimowski, *Living Philosophy: Eco-Philosophy as a Tree of Life*, 74.

⁴⁸ Skolimowski, *Living Philosophy: Eco-Philosophy as a Tree of Life*, 38.

⁴⁹ Skolimowski, *Living Philosophy: Eco-Philosophy as a Tree of Life*, 81.

⁵⁰ Merchant, *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, xxi.

this worldview and the ontological division that it presumes, Merchant proposes the rediscovery “of values associated with the premodern world that may be worthy of transformation and reintegration into today’s and tomorrow’s society.”⁵¹ In a similar manner, Plumwood argues that ontological division has inspired a prolonged period of Western conquest that has enriched Western conquerors at the expense of the human populations and environments that these conquerors have targeted, and she proposes an ecological ontology for the purpose of empowering those populations and environments that have suffered the effects of Western conquest. She argues that ontological division “is a story which has spoken mainly of conquest and control, of capture and use, of destruction and incorporation. This story is now a disabling story,” she argues.⁵² “Unless we change it, some of those now young may know what it is to live among the ruins of a civilization on a ruined planet.”⁵³ In opposition to ontological dualism and the destruction that it has wrought upon humans and the environment, she proposes the development of an ecological ontology rooted in the narratives of people whom the dominant forces of Western culture have subordinated. “Much inspiration for new, less destructive guiding stories can be drawn ... from subordinated and ignored parts of Western culture, such as women’s stories of care” or from “the sustaining stories of the cultures we have cast as outside reason.”⁵⁴ In a similar manner, Ruether attributes to ontological division various demographic distinctions that empower some people by subordinating others, and she proposes an ecological

⁵¹ Merchant, *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, xxiii.

⁵² Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 196.

⁵³ Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 196.

⁵⁴ Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 196.

ontology for the purpose of remediating the harm that ontological division inflicts upon subordinated populations and environments. “Western religious and philosophical thought, with its various syntheses of Hebrew, Greek and Christian themes,” she argues, “exhibits a tendency to identify ontological dualism, spirit and matter, mind and body, with a good/evil dichotomy.”⁵⁵ This dualism, she argues, “becomes identified with gender and class hierarchy” in which “Ruling class males come to be seen as closer to mind and reason, women and lower class people as closer to the bodily. They are more ‘carnal’, both in the sense of irrational, prone to sensual impulses, and in the sense of more prone to evil.”⁵⁶ In opposition to this ontological division and the injustice that it begets, Ruether promotes an ecological ontology that addresses “the universe as a living, self-organizing whole” in which “transcendence/immanence and spirit/matter dualisms” are “redefined as dynamic unities.”⁵⁷ In accordance with Merchant and Plumwood, therefore, Ruether proposes an ecological ontology for the purpose of remediating the social and environmental injustice that follows from ontological division.

Contemporary environmental humanists have come to appreciate the polyolithic quality of being on scales that are finer and more interdependent than the categories and subcategories that Merchant, Plumwood, and Ruether propose. While affirming the uneven manner in which ontological division and environmental degradation harm people across distinctions of race, class, gender, and culture, these more recent authors draw attention to the interspecies

⁵⁵ Ruether, “Dualism and the Nature of Evil in Feminist Theology,” 26.

⁵⁶ Ruether, “Dualism and the Nature of Evil in Feminist Theology,” 26.

⁵⁷ Ruether, “Dualism and the Nature of Evil in Feminist Theology,” 35.

constitution of each of these categories and the individuals who compose them. For example, in opposition to “the hierarchical organization of human/nonhuman,” Adrian Parr proposes the concept of “earthling” for the purpose of encouraging awareness of the existential interactions that bind all forms of life together.”⁵⁸ She defines “earthling” as “the nonbinary principle of *sharing* common to the thriving vitality of earthling-being that provides our point of departure into a transenvironmentalist journey across time, through the air, into oceanic waves, to ultimately submerge our ‘selves’ in encounters with other than human endeavors” and thus to make “us ‘part of the nature we seek to understand.’”⁵⁹ In a similar manner, Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt’s anthology *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* critiques Modernity’s focus on the individual and draws attention to the diverse, collective constitution of life in all of its forms.⁶⁰ The volume combines the work of authors in various disciplines and comprises sections each of which includes references to all others. Thus, the anthology exemplifies the “entanglement, complexity, and the shimmer all around us” to which each of the volume’s essays draws attention.⁶¹ Finally, in opposition to distinctions between the human and more-than-human worlds in the Western cultural imagination, Donna J. Haraway appeals to the concept of compost to illumine the multispecies engagements that constitute life. She identifies herself “philosophically and

⁵⁸ Parr, *Earthlings: Imaginative Encounters in the Natural World*, 4.

⁵⁹ Parr, *Earthlings: Imaginative Encounters in the Natural World*, 4.

⁶⁰ Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

⁶¹ Tsing et al., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*, G 11.

materially” as “a compostist” and observes that “critters – human and not – become-with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoietic tangling, in ecological evolutionary developmental worlding and unworlding.”⁶²

Based upon this observation of the multispecies composition of life, Haraway eschews the term “Anthropocene” on account of the distinction that it implies between humanity and the life forms that humans comprise and proposes instead the term “Chthulucene” – “a compound of two Greek roots (*kthon* and *kainos*) that together name a kind of timeplace for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth.”⁶³ Thus, contemporary environmental humanists blur the ontological distinctions that earlier ecological ontologies presume.

Whether they conceive of humanity and the environment as monolithic or polyolithic categories, authors whose opposition to ontological division follows from dovetailed concerns about humanity and the environment propose ecological ontologies as a means of combating the inhumanity and the environmental degradation that they attribute to ontological division.

Conclusion

In spite of the diversity of primary concerns that underlie the work of authors who propose an ecological understanding of being, a majority of these authors advance a common argument that ontological division is the origin of a contemporary ecological crisis that harms both humanity and the environment. Moreover, in the interest of challenging the authority of

⁶² Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*, 97.

⁶³ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*, 2.

ontological division and thus undermining its harmful consequences, all of these authors propose different ways of thinking about being that synthesize the categories that divisive ontologies distinguish and isolate from each other. Thus, the work of all of these authors presumes the primacy of intellectual activity in determining a person's way of being in the world. That is to say, all of these authors convey more or less explicitly the related assumptions that destructive ways of being in the world follow from destructive ways of thinking about being in the world and, therefore, that the work of changing one's way of being in the world follows from the work of changing how one thinks about one's being in the world.

The Limitation of Intellectual Approaches to Combating Ontological Division

Explanation of the destructive implications of ontological division and development and promotion of new, ecological ways of thinking about ourselves in relation to the empirical world are important components of the work of subverting the influence of ontological division. Indeed, intellectual diagnosis and remediation of the harm that ontological division has inflicted upon humanity and the environment enable practical remediation efforts by identifying destructive perspectives, on the one hand, and describing ways of being that promote ecological integrity, on the other. Thus, ecological ontologies provide a necessary vision of the ultimate goal that guides efforts to live in a sustainable way. Nonetheless, as many of these aforementioned ecological ontologies themselves explain, intellectual activity is but one of the many factors that condition human ways of being in the world, and belief in the primacy of the intellect follows from the ontological division that ecological ontologies oppose. In and of themselves, therefore, ecological ontologies necessarily fall short of undermining ontological division and investing in their audience the ecological experience of the world that these approaches presume and promote.

Based upon a more or less explicit awareness of the multiplicity of factors that condition human ways of being in the world, a number of critics of ontological division identify the prioritization of intellectual activity over all other dimensions of being as the principal cause of a contemporary ecological crisis. As we have seen, these critics argue that this crisis harms humanity and the environment respectively by fragmenting the sense of integrity that defines human wellbeing, on the one hand, and by isolating the being of humanity from the being of the rest of the world, on the other. As many of these critics conclude, therefore, the work of challenging ontological division and of thus encouraging ecological ways of being in the world requires a kind of loosening of the hegemony that intellectual ways of knowing have come to exercise over the various other dimensions of our lived experience and a consequent attention to the reciprocity of those dimensions with each other and with the world that we inhabit.

Since these authors work in a contemporary academic milieu that prioritizes intellectual knowing in precisely the manner that many of them critique, the paradox of their intellectual opposition to the hegemony of the intellect is not surprising. In a contemporary world that has come to identify verity with intellectual consistency, the credibility of any critique of intellectual hegemony hinges upon the intellectual viability of the critique. Hence, authors who take seriously the ecological problems that follow from ontological division and who wish to challenge the hegemony of the intellect in the experience of those who live and work within settings that prioritize intellectual activity must use what they oppose to convey their opposition. Only by submitting to the intellectual standards that they challenge can these authors hope to persuade their audience to attend to ontological division and the problems that follow from it.

There is a necessary discrepancy, therefore, between the intellectual medium that these authors use to critique ontological division and the holism that defines the ecological ontologies

that they promote. On account of this discrepancy, the work of these authors at once reinforces and opposes the hegemony of intellectual activity. On the one hand, the analytical medium that these authors use to convey their perspectives reinforces the primacy of the intellect by affirming the idea that viable ways of being in the world follow from coherent intellectual ways of thinking about being in the world. On the other hand, the content of the arguments that these authors advance challenges the primacy of the intellect by encouraging attention to the multiplicity of factors other than intellectual activity that condition being in the world. Therefore, while the content of these arguments demonstrates the possibility of an ecological way of being in the world, the medium of these arguments impedes the realization of this ecological way of being in the world.

Of themselves, therefore, ecological ontologies and the critiques of ontological division that they presume fall short of investing in their audience the ways of being in the world that they promote. While they delineate ways of thinking about being that undermine ontological division, the intellectual mode of being that underlies them inhibits their audience from actually being in the ways that they recommend. Therefore, the work of implementing ecological ontologies—of coming to be in the world as participants in the interactive processes by which the world sustains itself and of thus coming to know ourselves as unified beings who compose and are composed of the world that we inhabit – demands empirical research as well as intellectual speculation. Such empirical research might illumine the gap between people’s lived experience of being in the world and the particular ideals that ecological ontologies express. It might also help to identify practical means of subverting the hegemony of established intellectual modes of being in the world and of establishing consonance between people’s lived ontological experience and the ideals of ecological ontologies.

Environmental Aesthetics

Beginning in the early 1970s when the problem of anthropogenic environmental degradation first gained substantial attention within the academy, scholars working in the field of Western philosophy began to address the environment as a primary subject of inquiry.⁶⁴ These scholars came to gain association with a number of new subfields in philosophy, one of which was environmental aesthetics. In common with various other environmental philosophical subfields, environmental aesthetics emerged from an intellectual agenda that comprised complementary restorative and progressive interests. On the one hand, environmental aestheticians sought to restore the alignment between contemporary Western aesthetics and the ancient Greek philosophical tradition from which it evolved and to revive 18th and 19th century interest in the aesthetics of the natural world.⁶⁵ On the other hand, environmental aestheticians sought to prompt the evolution of Western aesthetics so that it might come to address the problem of anthropogenic environmental degradation.⁶⁶ In the discussion that follows, I will explain the intellectual historical background of these restorative and progressive efforts and I will discuss the perennial positions in contemporary environmental aesthetics that these efforts helped to establish. Throughout this discussion, I will devote particular attention to features of contemporary environmental aesthetics that are relevant to the phenomenon of artistic invention in association with *Monadnock*.

⁶⁴ Dale Jamieson, ed., *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), xv.

⁶⁵ Allen Carlson, *Nature and Landscape: An Introduction to Environmental Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 9.

⁶⁶ Allen Carlson and Sheila Lintott, eds., *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism: From Beauty to Duty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), vii.

Against the backdrop of humanity’s capacity to degrade the environment—a capacity that became ever more apparent in the early 1970s—the extent to which Western philosophical aesthetics had deviated during the first half of the 20th century from its foundation in ancient Greek philosophy became clear. As the etymology of the term “aesthetics” indicates, Western aesthetics evolved from an ancient Greek interest in the full range of human perceptual appreciation of the world and all that the world comprises. Indeed, as a number of early environmental aestheticians observed, the Greek word “aisthetikos” from which the term “aesthetics” evolved means “sensitive, sentient, pertaining to sense perception.”⁶⁷ “Aisthetikos” conveys no exclusive or even particular interest in any one of the human senses, any one subject of sensory appreciation, or any particular value that might be assigned to an object of sensory appreciation. In opposition to the comprehensive breadth of “aisthetikos” in ancient Greek philosophy, Western aesthetics during the early 20th century came to focus all but exclusively upon the appreciation of visual art commonly associated with favorable values, especially beauty, and thus to narrow significantly the scope of aesthetic inquiry.⁶⁸ Beginning in the 1970s, environmental aestheticians observed that this preoccupation with the appreciation of visual art neglected experience mediated by senses other than vision, on the one hand, and visual appreciation of objects other than art, on the other.⁶⁹ In the interest of promoting reflection upon aesthetic appreciation of the environment and thus bringing Western aesthetics to bear on

⁶⁷ Catherine Wesselinoff, *The Revival of Beauty: Aesthetics, Experience, and Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge, 2024), 5.

⁶⁸ Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, 7.

⁶⁹ Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, 9–10.

contemporary environmental issues, environmental aestheticians sought to restore the ancient Greek philosophical foundation of Western aesthetic inquiry and thus to broaden significantly the range of sensory experiences, objects, and values that Western aesthetics addressed.

In conjunction with this effort to position Western aesthetics once again atop its ancient philosophical foundation, environmental aestheticians sought to revive the interest in appreciation of the natural world that defined Western aesthetics beginning in the 18th century. A defining feature of the Modern aesthetics that underlay this interest in nature appreciation was an association of aesthetic appreciation with disinterestedness and, by extension, with the qualities that disinterestedness discloses. Although disinterestedness was a prominent feature of the aesthetics of such British writers as Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Frances Hutcheson, and Archibald Alison, the concept gained its most thorough and influential explication in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.⁷⁰ Kant used the term “disinterest” to describe a kind of pleasure that neither presumes nor produces desire.⁷¹ Further, he identified beauty and sublimity as the only sources of pleasure that are appreciable apart from desire, and thus, from a standpoint of disinterest.⁷² Kant’s identification of aesthetics with disinterest, on the one hand, established certain universal features of the human mind (rather than the particular dimensions of an individual’s subjective experience or the properties of an aesthetic object) as the source of the

⁷⁰ Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, 90.

⁷¹ Arden Reed, “The Debt of Disinterest: Kant’s Critique of Music,” *MLN* 95, no. 3 (1980), 565.

⁷² Andrew Lothian, “Landscape and the philosophy of aesthetics: is landscape quality inherent in the landscape or in the eye of the beholder?” *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 44, no. 4 (1999), 191.

appreciation that aesthetic objects seem to summon.⁷³ Kant's identification of disinterest with beauty and sublimity, on the other hand, narrowed the scope of aesthetics so that only those aesthetic experiences and objects that seemed to summon these kinds of appreciation were subject to aesthetic inquiry.⁷⁴ To the extent that these two tenets of Kant's aesthetics influenced the tradition of Modern aesthetics in general, they informed Modern aesthetic interest in the natural world in particular. Thus, 18th century aesthetic interest in nature focused all but exclusively upon gardens, which summoned appreciation of beauty, and alpine landscapes, which summoned appreciation of sublimity.⁷⁵

During the whole of the 19th century, however, the picturesque came to rival the influence of Kantian notions of beauty and sublimity in the Modern aesthetic tradition.⁷⁶ Notions of the picturesque that became popular in the 19th century followed from the work of such English writers as William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Richard Payne Knight.⁷⁷ Under the influence of these writers, 19th century aestheticians came to uphold the identity of the aesthetic appreciation of nature and visual art and to subordinate the appeal of natural landscapes to criteria that were used to assess the quality of a work of visual art.⁷⁸ Thus, natural aesthetics of the 19th century addressed vistas that resembled in composition the content of pleasing, two

⁷³ Lothian, "Landscape and the philosophy of aesthetics: is landscape quality inherent in the landscape or in the eye of the beholder?" 177.

⁷⁴ Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, 90.

⁷⁵ Emily Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics" in *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, J. Callicott and Robert Frodeman, eds. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2009), 314.

⁷⁶ Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, 3.

⁷⁷ Mavis Batey, "The Picturesque: An Overview," *Garden History* 22, no. 2 (1994), 121.

⁷⁸ Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, 4.

dimensional artistic images. The aesthetic appeal of such vistas hinged upon the extent to which they were picturesque or “picture-like.” As environmental aesthetician Allen Carlson observes, “picturesque items are typically in the middle ground between those experienced as either sublime or beautiful.”⁷⁹ Thus, the picturesque gained association with pastoral landscapes, which combined elements of the human cultivation that defined beautiful landscapes and the wildness that defined sublime landscapes.

Beyond simply reviving ancient and Modern perspectives in the history of Western aesthetics, environmental aestheticians sought to bring aesthetic reflection to bear upon a broader diversity of environments, sensory experiences, and aesthetic values. While the visual experience of landscapes that summoned appreciation of the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque remained a focus of environmental aesthetics, beginning in the 1980s, environmental aestheticians began to reflect upon human constructed environments.⁸⁰ Thus, urban and suburban settings and structures became subject to aesthetic interpretation, and this interpretation encompassed a variety of sensory appreciations.⁸¹ Rather than focusing all but exclusively upon visual appreciation in the manner of Modern aesthetics, environmental aesthetics came to address the appreciation of each of the human senses individually and to reflect upon the ways in which different sensory appreciations combine to produce an holistic aesthetic appreciation.⁸²

Moreover, as environmental aesthetics addressed a greater diversity of settings and senses, so too

⁷⁹ Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, 3.

⁸⁰ Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, 14.

⁸¹ Emily Brady and Jonathan Prior, “Environmental Aesthetics: A Synthetic Review,” *People and Nature* 2, no. 2 (2020), 262.

⁸² Brady and Prior, “Environmental Aesthetics: A Synthetic Review,” 255.

did the field come to focus upon quotidian aesthetic experiences associated with a broader range of values. In opposition to the preoccupation of Modern aesthetics with favorable, visual appreciations that people experience while engaging in leisurely exploration of settings beyond the sphere of their routine lives, “everyday aesthetics” came to address the full diversity of sensory experiences—both favorable and unfavorable—that people undergo within the sphere of their daily activity.⁸³ In addition to addressing visual experiences that summon appreciation of the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque, therefore, environmental aesthetics came to address sensory experiences generally that summon appreciation of such unfavorable values as ugliness, fear, and anxiety.⁸⁴

Environmental aestheticians have pursued these restorative and progressive agendas in an effort to reveal the diversity and the complexity of human sense experience, to demonstrate how physical environments and human sensibilities interact to produce human aesthetic appreciation, and thus to encourage vis-a-vis the environment a sense of value that might help to remediate anthropogenic environmental degradation. As the problems associated with such degradation have multiplied and worsened during the time that has passed since environmental aesthetics emerged as a subfield of environmental philosophy, the urgency of these efforts of environmental aestheticians have only increased.

Perennial Positions in Environmental Aesthetics

⁸³ Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 9–10.

⁸⁴ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 10.

The contemporary field of environmental aesthetics has come to comprise two opposing intellectual positions. These positions presume distinct conceptions of the nature of aesthetic experience and promote different methods for engaging in aesthetic reflection. On the one hand, scholarship that identifies factual knowledge as the origin of environmental aesthetic appreciation is often identified as “cognitive,” “conceptual,” or “narrative” aesthetics. This branch of environmental aesthetics investigates the ways in which knowledge of scientific, historical, and cultural information gives rise to aesthetic appreciation. On the other hand, scholarship that addresses an holistic sense of participation in the world as the basis of environmental aesthetic appreciation is often identified as “non-cognitive,” “non-conceptual,” or “ambient” aesthetics. This branch of environmental aesthetics investigates the dynamic ways in which physical environments and all that they comprise interact with subjective dimensions of human experience to produce aesthetic appreciation.⁸⁵ For the purpose of situating in the field of environmental aesthetics the results of my research on artistic invention in association with Monadnock, I will review the diversity of theories that each of these intellectual positions has generated.

Conceptual Models

According to scholars who propose conceptual models in environmental aesthetics, aesthetic inquiry serves a more or less prescriptive purpose. Rather than describing perceptual appreciation as it is lived, conceptual models seek to establish a common set of criteria that

⁸⁵ The terms “conceptual” and “nonconceptual” seem best to accommodate the diversity of models that each branch of environmental aesthetics comprises, I will use these terms henceforth.

might be used to distinguish such appreciation from other kinds of perceptual experience. In accordance with Kantian aesthetics, contemporary conceptual models favor a disinterested, objective understanding of aesthetic appreciation, and a majority of them focus primarily, if not exclusively, upon appreciation of the natural world. As a means of establishing the parameters of aesthetics as a perceptual category, conceptual environmental aestheticians all identify factual knowledge as the basis of proper aesthetic appreciation. Nonetheless, they disagree about the genre and the content of the knowledge that such appreciation should presume. While some scholars attribute aesthetic appreciation to a more or less complex knowledge of natural science, others identify human cultural knowledge as the proper foundation of aesthetic appreciation, and others still argue that aesthetic appreciation should follow from a combination of scientific and human cultural knowledge.

Most conceptual models in environmental aesthetics affirm the principles of “scientific cognitivism.”⁸⁶ These models identify objective, scientific knowledge as the proper foundation for aesthetic appreciation. In spite of this general point of similarity, however, the knowledge that scientific cognitive models prioritize varies in sophistication and genre. While some scientific cognitive models identify rudimentary, categorical knowledge of an aesthetic object as a sufficient foundation for proper aesthetic appreciation, others suggest that such appreciation should follow from a more specific, studied knowledge of aesthetic objects and their environmental interactions.

⁸⁶ Glenn Parsons, “Nature Appreciation, Science, and Positive Aesthetics,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002), 279.

Most scientific cognitive models identify a general, categorical understanding of the natural world as a sufficient foundation for proper aesthetic appreciation. For example, Malcolm Budd argues that aesthetic appreciation of nature should follow from a general concept of nature. “Aesthetic appreciation of nature,” he notes, “is the aesthetic appreciation of nature as nature (as what nature actually is)” and “natural items should be appreciated aesthetically under no concepts at all (except that of nature itself).”⁸⁷ Allen Carlson, in turn, identifies “common sense/scientific knowledge” more specifically as the proper foundation of environmental aesthetic appreciation.⁸⁸ Carlson argues that such knowledge of science gives rise to aesthetic appreciation of environment in the same way that knowledge of art history gives rise to aesthetic appreciation of art: by conditioning one’s expectations and directing one’s attention towards certain features and away from others. In a similar manner, Holmes Rolston III argues that environmental aesthetic appreciation should be rooted in general scientific knowledge. As “science cultivates the habit of looking closely,” he argues, so scientific knowledge helps to dispel the “mistaken interpretative frameworks” that underlie improper aesthetic appreciation.⁸⁹ In accordance with Carlson, Patricia Matthews appeals to the analogy of art appreciation to justify her argument that a proper aesthetic appreciation of environment follows from “empirical knowledge” that “will give us perceptual norms” and thus “indicate which features are standard,

⁸⁷ Malcolm Budd, “The Aesthetics of Nature,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2000), 142.

⁸⁸ Allen Carlson, “Appreciation and the Natural Environment,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979), 273.

⁸⁹ Holmes Rolston, III, “Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscapes Need to be Science-Based?” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 35, no. 4 (1995), 376, 383.

contrastandard, and variable.”⁹⁰ Further, Ned Hettinger identifies “knowledge of the environment ... generally” as the proper foundation for environmental aesthetic appreciation. Such knowledge, he argues, “does and should influence appropriate frames and judgments” and thus “help differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate aesthetic responses.”⁹¹

Other scientific cognitive models identify a more specific, studied understanding of aesthetic objects and their environmental interactions as the proper foundation of aesthetic appreciation. For example, Marcia Muelder Eaton argues that proper aesthetic appreciation of environment follows from knowledge of ecology in particular. She argues that aesthetic appreciation of nature “must be based upon tempered by, directed and enriched by solid ecological knowledge.”⁹² Such an understanding, she argues, gives rise to aesthetic appreciations that “produce the kind of attitudes and preferences that will generate the kind of care [for the environment] that we hope for.”⁹³ In a similar manner, Paul H. Gobster argues that environmental aesthetic appreciation should follow from an understanding of the particular fields of biology and ecology. In accordance with the philosophy of Aldo Leopold, Gobster affirms the importance of “integrating biological and ecological concepts with esthetic appreciation” so that such appreciation might promote environmental responsibility and action.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Patricia Matthews, “Scientific Knowledge and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002), 40.

⁹¹ Ned Hettinger, “Objectivity in Environmental Aesthetics and Protection of the Natural Environment” in Carlson and Lintott, eds., *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*, 426.

⁹² Marcia Eaton, “Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56, no. 2 (1998), 153.

⁹³ Eaton, “Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” 155.

⁹⁴ Paul H. Gobster, “Aldo Leopold’s ‘Ecological Esthetic’: Integrating Esthetic and Biodiversity Values,” *Journal of Forestry*, 93, no. 2 (1995), 9.

According to a smaller number of conceptual models, environmental aesthetic appreciation should follow from an understanding of human cultural history. Thomas Heyd, who is perhaps the most well-known proponent of this position, advances his human cultural model of environmental aesthetic appreciation in opposition to the principles of scientific cognitivism. With primary reference to Carlson's natural environmental model, Heyd argues that scientific cognitivism errs in identifying knowledge of the origin of an aesthetic object as a sufficient foundation for aesthetic appreciation, in assuming that scientific knowledge necessarily promotes aesthetic appreciation, and in failing to acknowledge the potential for science to hinder the possibility for environmental aesthetic appreciation to yield discovery.⁹⁵ In the place of scientific knowledge, therefore, Heyd identifies three categories of "stories about nature" that constitute together a proper foundation for aesthetic appreciation. These categories are "artistic stories," "non-artistic stories," and "non-verbally expressed stories."⁹⁶ Rather than discouraging or limiting the possibilities of aesthetic appreciation in the manner of scientific knowledge according to Heyd, this diversity of human cultural narratives "enriches our capacities to appreciate the natural environment (pure or modified) aesthetically."⁹⁷

Finally, a number of conceptual models identify scientific and human cultural knowledge together as a proper foundation for environmental aesthetic appreciation. Yuriko Saito, for example, argues that aesthetic appreciation of nature should fulfill a moral obligation of

⁹⁵ Thomas Heyd, "Aesthetic Appreciation and the Many Stories about Nature," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 41, no. 2 (2001), 125–137.

⁹⁶ Heyd, "Aesthetic Appreciation and the Many Stories about Nature," 131–134.

⁹⁷ Heyd, "Aesthetic Appreciation and the Many Stories about Nature," 136.

disclosing nature as it is, apart from the values and the ideals that human culture projects upon it. She argues that a proper appreciation of nature “would involve listening to nature’s own story and appreciating it on its own terms, instead of imposing *our* story upon it.”⁹⁸ While she recognizes that knowledge of individual scientific and human cultural accounts of nature disclose stories that humans have imposed upon nature rather than nature as it is, she argues that knowledge of a diversity of both kinds of accounts can delve beneath cultural constructions of nature and thus fulfill the moral requirement of appreciating nature as it is. Thus, she recognizes “that appreciating nature for its pure pictorial design or through historical/cultural/literary associations ... lacks the moral dimension specified above.”⁹⁹ On the other hand, she proposes “that our appreciation guided by any attempt to understand nature for what it is, whether it be science, mythology, or folklore, satisfies this moral criteria [sic.] for appropriate appreciation.”¹⁰⁰

While conceptual environmental aestheticians acknowledge the diversity that characterizes environmental appreciation, they reject the idea that all environmental appreciations are aesthetic. In the interest of establishing aesthetics as an objective and universal experiential category and thus defending the field against critiques of relativism and subjectivism, conceptual environmental aestheticians work to establish criteria for distinguishing aesthetic appreciation from other, more superficial kinds of appreciation. All conceptual models

⁹⁸ Yuriko Saito, “Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms” in *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, eds. Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 142.

⁹⁹ Saito, “Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms,” 142.

¹⁰⁰ Saito, “Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms,” 142.

identify concrete knowledge about objects of appreciation as the proper criterion for distinguishing aesthetic and non-aesthetic appreciation. While they prioritize different kinds of knowledge, all conceptual models identify as properly aesthetic only appreciation that follows from such concrete knowledge.

Non-Conceptual Models

While conceptual models pursue the prescriptive purpose of delimiting aesthetic appreciation, non-conceptual models pursue the descriptive purpose of giving account to such appreciation as it is experienced. In opposition to the cognitive standard of objectivity that conceptual models use to distinguish aesthetic from non-aesthetic appreciation, non-conceptual models address aesthetic appreciation as an experience of immersion that summons principally various non-conceptual responses including sense perceptions, thoughts, impressions, memories, emotions, and creative musings. As an immersive experience, aesthetic appreciation diminishes a sense of the cognitive distinctions that conceptual models maintain between aesthetic subjects and objects. Although all non-conceptual models address aesthetic appreciation as an experience of immersion, they attribute this experience to various perceptual processes. In the discussion of non-conceptual environmental aesthetic models that follows, I will proceed from discussing non-conceptual models that attribute aesthetic appreciation to the broadest of perceptual processes to discussing non-conceptual models that attribute aesthetic appreciation to ever more specific perceptual processes. In the course of this discussion, I will identify Arnold Berleant's aesthetics of engagement as the most encompassing of non-conceptual models, and I will suggest that all other non-conceptual models can be understood as variations on particular features of Berleant's model.

Berleant's aesthetics of engagement encompasses all of the experiential components of aesthetic appreciation. Rather than attributing such appreciation to a particular kind of empirical or human cultural knowledge in the manner of cognitive models or to some particular medium of immersion in the manner of other non-conceptual models, Berleant's aesthetics of engagement identifies aesthetic appreciation as the dynamic interaction of any and all of the experiential dimensions that condition one's perception of a given environment. On the one hand, he argues, the inner dimensions of human consciousness help to condition aesthetic appreciation. "In engaging aesthetically with environment," he argues, "the knowledge, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes we have ... direct our attention, open or close us to what is happening, and prepare or impede our participation."¹⁰¹ As these kinds of established perspectives inform the experience of aesthetic appreciation, so too, on the other hand, do the features of the world around us. An environment that is the subject of aesthetic appreciation, argues Berleant, "possesses distinctive sensory qualities: the texture of the ground under foot, the whiff of pine needles or the organic redolence of a damp brook side, the conformation of the terrain through which I walk, the visual textures within a forest, the kinaesthetic pull of a path."¹⁰² Aesthetic engagement, therefore, proceeds neither from the inner workings of the human mind alone nor from the properties of aesthetic objects alone, but from an interaction of all inner and outer experiential dimensions in which each dimension conditions all others. Berleant observes, "Inside and outside,

¹⁰¹ Arnold Berleant, *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 13.

¹⁰² Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 27–28.

consciousness and world, human being and natural processes are not pairs of opposites but aspects of the same thing: the unity of the human environment.”¹⁰³ Thus, he observes, “the concept of engagement ... epitomizes a holistic, unified aesthetic.”¹⁰⁴ In opposition to cognitive and other non-conceptual models that attribute aesthetic appreciation to a specific dimension of experience, Berleant’s aesthetics of engagement defines aesthetic appreciation as an experience of the interaction of all experiential dimensions and thus accommodates any and all of the particular dimensions to which other models attribute aesthetic appreciation exclusively.

A number of non-conceptual models identify the human imagination as an important component of aesthetic appreciation. While these models address imagining as a process through which a person gains a sense of environmental immersion, they propose various accounts of the function and the content of aesthetic imagination. Ronald Hepburn draws attention to the potential for imagination to prompt appreciation of the environment in association with essential ideas about the human condition, the world, and the universe. He identifies this “metaphysical imagination” as a feature of aesthetic appreciation that operates in conjunction with various cognitive and non-conceptual processes to determine the whole of a person’s experience of a given environment. “Metaphysical imagination,” he argues, “connects with, looks to, the ‘spelled out’ systematic metaphysical theorising which is its support and ultimate justification.”¹⁰⁵ He argues further that metaphysical imagination “is no less an element of the concrete present

¹⁰³ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment*, 11–12.

¹⁰⁴ Arnold Berleant, “What is Aesthetic Engagement?” *Contemporary Aesthetics* 11 (2013).

¹⁰⁵ Ronald Hepburn, “Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination,” *Environmental Values* 5, no. 3 (1996), 192.

landscape-experience: it is fused with the sensory components...¹⁰⁶ By combining cognitive metaphysical theory and non-conceptual sensory perception, metaphysical imagination “helps to determine the overall experience of a scene of nature.”¹⁰⁷ In a manner similar to Hepburn, Jukka Mikkonen addresses imagination as a primary aesthetic medium that combines with cognitive and other non-conceptual activity to determine the general character of an experience of environment. While Hepburn describes the content of aesthetic imagination, Mikkonen describes the narrative form in which imagination conveys this content. With reference to the particular setting of Northern coniferous forests, she argues that imagination blends immediate sensory perception with inherited cultural stories about forests such that aesthetic appreciation assumes the narrative form of a story. Based upon her observation that “the notion of *story* has been associated with the aesthetic appreciation of nature,” she identifies “stories both as culturally inherited regulative models and as tools that can be applied to enhance the aesthetic experience of environment.”¹⁰⁸ Finally, in opposition to the monolithic understanding of imagination that Hepburn and Mikkonen’s aesthetic models presume, Emily Brady identifies the following four modes of imagination: the exploratory, the projective, and ampliative, and the revelatory. She observes that each of these modes gives rise to a distinct aesthetic appreciation of nature. Exploratory imagination, she observes, examines “the forms of the object as we perceptually

¹⁰⁶ Hepburn, “Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination,” 192.

¹⁰⁷ Hepburn, “Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination,” 192.

¹⁰⁸ Jukka Mikkonen, “Knowledge, Imagination, and Stories in the Aesthetic Experience of Forests,” *Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics* LV/XI (2018), 13.

attend to it” and thus “helps the percipient to make an initial discovery of aesthetic qualities.”¹⁰⁹ Projective imagination she defines as a process of “imagining ‘on to’ what is perceived such that what is actually there is somehow added to, replaced with, or overlaid by a projected image.”¹¹⁰ Ampliative imagination, in turn, “involves the *inventive* powers of imagination” in a process that “amplifies what is given in perception” and thus “enable[s] us to approach natural objects from entirely new standpoints.”¹¹¹ Finally, revelatory imagination is ampliative imagination that “leads to the discovery of an *aesthetic truth*.”¹¹² “When my ... contemplation of the valley, glaciers and all, reveals the tremendous power of the earth to me,” she explains, “a kind of truth has emerged through a distinctively aesthetic experience.”¹¹³ Thus, Brady deconstructs the kind of singular understanding of imagination that Hepburn and Mikkonen’s aesthetic models presume.

Finally, a number of non-conceptual models attribute aesthetic appreciation to a strong sense of the otherness of the natural world. In opposition to cognitive and other non-conceptual models that define aesthetic appreciation as a process of assimilating environmental perception into established ways of knowing, models that emphasize the otherness of nature identify the unknown as the basis of proper aesthetic appreciation. According to these models, environments that become subject to aesthetic appreciation are those that exceed our established ways of

¹⁰⁹ Emily Brady, “Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56, no. 2 (1998), 143.

¹¹⁰ Brady, “Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” 143.

¹¹¹ Brady, “Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” 143.

¹¹² Brady, “Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” 144.

¹¹³ Brady, “Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” 144.

knowing and leave us at a loss of understanding. For example, Stan Godlovitch identifies mystery as the proper basis of aesthetic appreciation. Mystery, he argues, is irreducible to established cognitive and non-conceptual ways of knowing. Based upon the supposition that “Nature as a whole eludes our science and our affection,” Godlovitch argues that “the only fitting aesthetic regard for it is a sense of mystery.”¹¹⁴ While mystery “cannot ... be apprehended from within the cognitive-scientific point of view,” neither can it “rely upon reverence or respect, love or attachment.”¹¹⁵ “Nature is aloof,” he concludes, “and it is this aloofness we come, not so much to understand or revere as ... to grasp without capture.”¹¹⁶ In a manner similar to Godlovitch, Noel Carroll suggests that aesthetic appreciation need not follow from knowledge of any kind and that such appreciation often involves “a sense of mystery.”¹¹⁷ Contrary to Godlovitch, however, Carroll identifies emotions as a sufficient basis for aesthetic appreciation. Based upon his observation that “appreciating nature ... often involves being moved or emotionally aroused by nature,” Carroll proposes an arousal model of environmental aesthetic appreciation according to which “we can be moved by nature—*sans* guidance by scientific categories—and ... such experiences have a genuine claim to be counted among the ways in which nature may be (legitimately) appreciation.”¹¹⁸ In opposition to cognitive and other non-

¹¹⁴ Stan Godlovitch, “Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 11, no. 1 (1994), 26.

¹¹⁵ Godlovitch, “Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics,” 26.

¹¹⁶ Godlovitch, “Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics,” 28.

¹¹⁷ Noel Carroll, “On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural Beauty,” in *Landscape, Natural Beauty, and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 251.

¹¹⁸ Carroll, “On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural Beauty,” 245.

conceptual aesthetic models, therefore, Godlovitch and Carroll affirm the possibility for aesthetic appreciation of nature to arise independent of conscious mental activity.

As the foregoing discussion has demonstrated, non-conceptual environmental aesthetic models offer different perspectives on the extent to which established ways of knowing interact with sensory perception, the perceptual modes that aesthetic appreciation involves, and the mental content that aesthetic appreciation comprises. With regard to these particular features of non-conceptual aesthetics, therefore, some of the models that I have discussed are irreconcilable. For example, the idea that aesthetic appreciation follows, in part, from established ways of knowing is incompatible with the idea that aesthetic appreciation arises from a sense of the unknown. Even aesthetic models that belong to the same general category of non-conceptual environmental aesthetics comprise irreconcilable components. Within the aesthetics of imagination, for example, Hepburn and Mikkonen's monolithic understanding of imagination is incompatible with Brady's pluralistic understanding of imagination. As a consequence of the irreconcilability of their constituent ideas, therefore, some non-conceptual environmental aesthetic models are mutually exclusive.

Nonetheless, by virtue of the breadth and the fundamentality of Berleant's concept of engagement, Berleant's model subsumes all of the perceptual modes to which other non-conceptual models attribute aesthetic appreciation. On the one hand, for reasons that I will later discuss, engagement is broader than any of the experiential modes to which other non-conceptual models attribute aesthetic appreciation. Berleant defines engagement as "full somatic involvement, joining physical perception with an imaginative and often a conscious association of memories and meanings," and thus, he conceives of the aesthetic appreciation to

which engagement gives rise as an experience that involves “the total person.”¹¹⁹ Since engagement encompasses imagination along with any and all of the bodily and mental activity that conditions aesthetic appreciation, Hepburn, Mikkonen, and Brady’s aesthetics of imagination can be understood as particular dimensions of engagement. On the other hand, engagement is more rudimentary than the sense of otherness with which Godlovitch and Carroll identify environmental aesthetic appreciation. Indeed, a sense of the otherness of the natural world necessarily follows from experience of the bodily and mental processes that engagement comprises. That is to say, one can become aware of the mystery of an environment or become subject to the arousal that an environment seems to summon only after that environment has engaged one’s senses and mental processes. In such instances, a primary sense of immersion gives rise to a sense of mystery or arousal or a more general sense of otherness that describes not only the environment as an aesthetic object, but the interaction between the perceptual processes of an individual and the environment that these processes mediate. From the standpoint of engagement, therefore, mystery and arousal can be understood as senses that emerge from the reciprocal dynamics of perception and the environment. Thus, the breadth and the fundamentality of Berleant’s aesthetics of engagement subsume all other non-conceptual environmental aesthetic models.

In the foregoing discussion of perennial positions in the field of environmental aesthetics, I have sought to explain the differences between conceptual and non-conceptual environmental aesthetics and to reveal the diversity of models that each of these branches in the field comprises.

¹¹⁹ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 119.

In addition to summarizing many of the most influential models in both branches of environmental aesthetics, I have argued that Berleant's aesthetics of engagement subsumes all other non-conceptual aesthetic models either by encompassing or by preceding the experiential mode with which these other models identify aesthetic appreciation.

The Trouble with Engagement

Nonetheless, careful scrutiny of the concept of engagement reveals a basic point of tension that compromises the coherence and inhibits the practical implementation of Berleant's aesthetic model. This point of tension follows from the dual purpose of engagement to describe environmental aesthetic experience, on the one hand, and to prescribe a mode of conscious environmental aesthetic appreciation, on the other. While each of these descriptive and prescriptive purposes coheres apart from the other, features of both purposes undermine the compatibility of each with the other. More specifically, the continuity between aesthetic appreciation and established ways of knowing according to the descriptive dimension of engagement prevents conscious awareness of the continuity of percipient and environment that the prescriptive dimension of engagement encourages.

Berleant advances engagement as a descriptive concept that explains independently of conscious awareness the structure of lived aesthetic experience. In opposition to the dualistic ontology that underlies traditional Western aesthetics, Berleant constructs his aesthetics of engagement upon a unified ontology that addresses as a singular subject all that constitutes aesthetic percipients and the environments that they appreciate. In the interest of distinguishing his aesthetics of engagement from the traditional Western aesthetic models that he opposes, Berleant introduces his discussion of engagement with a critique of the ontology that underlies such aesthetic models. Early in *The Aesthetics of Environment*, for example, he argues that

traditional Western aesthetics presume “a history of willful obscurantism” consisting of “a whole array of ontological dualisms that divide experience into opposing modalities, dualisms such as contact senses and distance senses, mind and body, inner self and outer world, contemplative and active attitudes.”¹²⁰ Similarly, in the introduction to *Living in the Landscape*, Berleant critiques the deconstructive analytical methodology of traditional Western philosophy. “For most of its nearly 2,500 year history,” he argues, “philosophy in the West has sought to grasp the world by disclosing its components and structure rather than its connections and continuities.”¹²¹ In opposition to this tendency of traditional Western ontology to fragment existence and to examine each of its component parts in isolation from all others, Berleant works to undermine the distinctions that traditional Western ontology opposes and thus to reveal the singularity of being. For example, he counters the dualism that he critiques in *The Aesthetics of Environment* with the observation that “there is no outside world. There is no outside. Nor is there an inner sanctum in which I can take refuge from inimical external forces. The perceiver (mind) is an aspect of the perceived (body) and conversely; person and environment are continuous.”¹²² Similarly, in opposition to the deconstructive Western philosophical methodology that he critiques in *Living in the Landscape*, Berleant identifies the concept of continuity as “an ordering principle that reshapes our understanding of the very nature of things” and offers to the field of environmental aesthetics “the best account of what environment is and means.”¹²³ In accordance with the

¹²⁰ Berleant, *Aesthetics of Environment*, 18.

¹²¹ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 5.

¹²² Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 4.

¹²³ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 7.

ontological presupposition that “we are continuous with environment, an integral part of its processes,” Berleant constructs his aesthetics of engagement—a model that defines aesthetic appreciation as a perceptual experience of the continuity of percipient and environment that defines human existence in general.¹²⁴ Thus, Berleant’s purpose is principally ontological. He advances his aesthetics of engagement to correct the error that he observes in the ontology of traditional Western aesthetics, to propose in its place a more accurate understanding of being, and to construct upon this understanding an aesthetic model that explains more correctly what aesthetic appreciation actually *is*.

Nonetheless, Berleant’s aesthetics of engagement includes a prescriptive dimension that indicates his purpose not only to explain the ontology of aesthetic appreciation but also to encourage conscious awareness of the continuity that defines the lived experience of such appreciation. Berleant intends for his aesthetics of engagement “to encourage the reader toward vivid aesthetic encounters” that produce “a living sense of the actual continuities that bind my conscious body to the places I inhabit.”¹²⁵ Thus, on the one hand, Berleant’s interest in fostering the development of his readers’ aesthetic experience follows from a natural intention to bring into alignment the epistemology and the ontology of his readers’ aesthetic appreciation—that is, to ensure that his readers’ understanding of aesthetic appreciation reflects what aesthetic appreciation actually is. On the other hand, Berleant encourages his readers to pursue conscious awareness of the continuity that defines aesthetic appreciation because he believes that such

¹²⁴ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 30.

¹²⁵ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 26, 28.

awareness has a potential beyond the particular domain of aesthetic experience to enrich the lives of individuals and the world at large. With reference to the experience of the individual, Berleant contends that conscious awareness of aesthetic engagement enhances well-being by expanding one's sense of self and thus producing a sense of connection to the other components of an environment. "Apprehending the aesthetic value of landscape," he argues, "offers cognitive gratification."¹²⁶ More specifically, he contends that awareness of aesthetic engagement "[enlarges] not only our personal experience but our social understanding."¹²⁷ In conjunction with these benefits for the individual, Berleant upholds the potential for conscious awareness of aesthetic engagement to ameliorate the dominant social and political structures in accordance with which the world operates. "An environmental aesthetics of engagement," he argues, "suggests deep political changes away from hierarchy and its exercise of power and toward community, where people freely engage in mutually fulfilling activities."¹²⁸ Moreover, he contends that such an aesthetic "implies a human family order that relinquishes authoritarian control and encourages cooperation and reciprocity."¹²⁹ Finally, he suggests that conscious engagement "leads toward acceptance, friendship, and love that abandon exploitation and possessiveness and promote sharing and mutual empowerment."¹³⁰ Thus, the prescriptive dimension of Berleant's aesthetics of engagement follows from an agenda that is at once epistemological and socio-political. In an effort to align his readers' aesthetic understanding with

¹²⁶ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 18.

¹²⁷ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 39.

¹²⁸ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 13.

¹²⁹ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 13.

¹³⁰ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 13.

the ontology of their aesthetic experience, to enrich their lives as individuals, and to promote the development of an egalitarian sense of community, Berleant encourages the pursuit of conscious awareness of aesthetic engagement.

In a paradoxical manner, the continuity that defines the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of Berleant's aesthetics of engagement compromises the compatibility of each dimension with the other. According to the descriptive dimension of engagement, aesthetic appreciation is continuous with established ways of knowing. As Berleant acknowledges, "we carry our knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes with us," and these components of our assimilated knowledge "participate in the process of [aesthetic] experience and enable us to structure and interpret it."¹³¹ Moreover, in opposition to the supposed personalism and subjectivism of aesthetic experience, Berleant observes that "the knowledge, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes we have are largely social, cultural, and historical in origin" and that these features of assimilated knowledge "direct our attention, open or close us to what is happening, and prepare or impede our participation."¹³² As Berleant's discussion of Western cultural history demonstrates, most assimilated knowledge of Western cultural origin tends to prevent conscious awareness of the continuity that defines aesthetic engagement. Thus, Berleant acknowledges that Western culture tends to "[regard] humans as *placed in* ... rather than *continuous with*" environment and admits that "the metaphysical bias of our [Western] culture is nearly impossible to avoid."¹³³ The continuity of aesthetic appreciation and dualistic assimilated knowledge according to the

¹³¹ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 13.

¹³² Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 13.

¹³³ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 10.

descriptive dimension of engagement inhibits the conscious awareness of the continuity of percipient and environment that the prescriptive dimension of engagement encourages.

Ultimately, the integrity of Berleant's aesthetic model hinges upon the resolution of the tension between the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of engagement and the consequent potential for individuals to gain conscious awareness of the continuity that defines their aesthetic appreciation. According to Berleant, such conscious awareness operates as the principal criterion according to which aesthetic accounts should be developed and revised. On the one hand, Berleant implies that the conception of his aesthetic model followed from a conscious awareness of the continuity that defines his own aesthetic experience. He states that "the argument for continuity rests on an awakened sense of experience, on occasions that, though rare, impress us by their vividness and force."¹³⁴ On the other hand, Berleant identifies a conscious awareness of lived aesthetic experience as the proper basis for assessing and revising established aesthetic concepts. "The essential problem" with aesthetic interpretation, he argues, "is to keep the meanings true to the directness of sensory awareness and not to edit that awareness to fit our customary meanings."¹³⁵ In Berleant's aesthetic model, therefore, conscious awareness of lived aesthetic experience enables both critique and revision of established aesthetic knowledge. Conversely, apart from the possibility of a conscious awareness of aesthetic experience, Berleant's aesthetic concepts, though descriptive of lived experience, become immune to the

¹³⁴ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 110.

¹³⁵ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 23.

qualifying influence of such experience and his model thus joins the plethora of “customary meanings” that Berleant means to challenge.

The Artistic Appeal of Monadnock

The corpus of secondary literature that addresses artistic invention in association with Monadnock is diverse in both style and genre. On the one hand, popular books and articles address Monadnock art in conjunction with the broader natural and cultural history of the mountain. On the other hand, academic literature in a diversity of disciplines offers nuanced discussion of either particular Monadnock artists or artistic compositions. From the standpoint of a distinctive set of interests, therefore, popular and academic literature draws helpful attention to the phenomenon of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. Nonetheless, both genres of literature presume established explanations of how and why Monadnock has gained association with artistic invention and neither genre of literature subjects to critical analysis the particular explanation that it presumes.

On the one hand, popular literature – a genre that comprises book-length historical overviews and articles published in nonacademic periodicals – has addressed artistic invention in association with Monadnock from the standpoint of a kind of tacit essentialism, according to which the unusual appeal of Monadnock stems from a power that inheres in the mountain itself. Among the earliest and best-known example of this genre of Monadnock literature is Allen Chamberlain’s *The Annals of the Grand Monadnock*—a book published first in 1936 that addresses a diversity of human cultural and natural historical topics. Underlying Chamberlain’s discussion of Monadnock art is an essentialist understanding of the mountain’s appeal, according to which the power of “the mountain’s stalwart beauty . . . holds the affection of a multitude of devotees” who are drawn more specifically to its “rugged masculinity” and its “gaunt

cragginess.”¹³⁶ Although Craig Brandon’s more recent book, *Monadnock: More than a Mountain*, offers a more thorough discussion of the mountain’s cultural history, it presumes a similar sort of essentialist understanding of Monadnock’s historic and contemporary appeal. In contrast to Chamberlain’s minimal attention to the literature, art, and music of Monadnock, Brandon offers in chapters entitled “Writers & Poets,” “Thoreau & Emerson,” “Painters & Photographers,” “Musicians & Dancers,” and “Legends & Mysteries” detailed discussion of the artistic invention that is associated with the mountain. Nonetheless, in a chapter entitled “Magic Mountain,” he quietly affirms the belief of “some observers” that “Monadnock has such a powerful effect on people because it is *literally a magic mountain*.”¹³⁷ Finally, B. Eugene McCarthy’s “The Monadnock School of Pastoral Poets” and Ronn Cabaniol’s “The Monadnock Roar,” though distinct in content and style, express a common essentialist understanding of the mountain’s artistic appeal. McCarthy’s discussion of Monadnock’s status among writers and artists is rooted in his appreciation of Monadnock as a mountain that “stands with a power that marks a place.”¹³⁸ In a similar manner, Cabaniol’s personal essay about climbing Monadnock hinges on his experience of hearing the legendary “Monadnock roar”—a “kind of sound,” he states, “that turns hair white. A deep, fierce, almost deafening roar” that he ascribes to

¹³⁶ Allen Chamberlain, *The Annals of The Grand Monadnock* (Concord: Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, 1968), 1.

¹³⁷ Brandon, *Monadnock: More Than a Mountain*, 18.

¹³⁸ B. Eugene McCarthy, “The Monadnock School of Pastoral Poets,” *Monadnock Pastoral Poets and Writers*, 2011, accessed on August 24, 2023, <https://monadnockpastoralpoets.org/our-story/monadnock-essays/by-b-eugene-mccarthy/>.

Monadnock itself.¹³⁹ Thus, according to popular literature, the artistic appeal of Monadnock stems from a kind of magnetic power that inheres in the mountain itself.

On the other hand, in opposition to popular belief in the inherent power of Monadnock, academic literature in the fields of literary criticism, art history, cultural history, and geography has presumed the human cultural invention of the mountain's artistic appeal. In the field of literary criticism, various authors have attributed to contemporaneous literary conventions the meaning that Monadnock literature itself ascribes to the mountain. For example, Lauriat Lane, Jr. identifies the symbolic significance of mountains in the poetry of 19th century New England in general as the origin of the meaning of Monadnock in the poetry of Thoreau and Emerson.¹⁴⁰ In a similar manner, Nicholas Birns identifies Emerson's precedent interest in the intersection of time and space as the origin of the meaning that Emerson assigns to Monadnock.¹⁴¹ Moreover, Lawrence Buell identifies the "expressivist approach to writing" and the "idealized view of exotic locations and the life of adventure" during the Romantic era as the source of Thoreau's appreciation of Monadnock.¹⁴² In a parallel manner, authors in the field of art history attribute the content and the style of Monadnock paintings to philosophical and stylistic influences. For example, Michelle Stahl observes in late 19th century paintings of Monadnock a "changing view of the landscape and its meaning" that she attributes to the post-Civil War influence of

¹³⁹ Ronn Cabaniol, "The Monadnock Roar," *Yankee Magazine* 54, no. 11 (1990).

¹⁴⁰ Lauriat Lane, Jr., "Mountain Gloom and Yankee Poetry: Thoreau, Emerson, Frost," *Dalhousie Review* 55, no. 4 (1976), 612–630.

¹⁴¹ Nicholas Birns, "The Horizon's Hoop: Emerson's 'Monadnoc' in Contingency and History," *The Humanities Commons*, 2014, accessed on August 24, 2023, <https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/mla:393/>.

¹⁴² Lawrence Buell, *Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 195–196.

Transcendental philosophy and Japanese art.¹⁴³ Further, authors in the field of cultural history attribute the artistic appeal of Monadnock in a given time period to contemporaneous historical trends. Thus, Howard Mansfield observes in the history of the 19th century a diminished appreciation of the grandeur of Monadnock that he attributes to westward expansion and a consequent increase in awareness of the greater magnitude of the mountains of the west.¹⁴⁴ Finally, while authors in the field of geography acknowledge the potential for mountains to elicit certain ideas in the minds of those who visit them, such authors have generally attributed such ideas to the human tendency of association. Thus, A.L. Rydant and Klaus J. Bayr identify the artistic appeal of Monadnock as an example of the general tendency for people to associate “loftier ideals” about the position of humanity in the cosmos with the physical geography of mountains.¹⁴⁵ Thus, academic literature subordinates artistic interest in Monadnock to various products of human cultural invention.

While popular and academic literature about Monadnock draws helpful attention to Monadnock art and artists, both genres of literature presume explanations of the mountain’s artistic appeal that resist critical analysis. These explanations differ in the sense that they attribute artistic invention in association with Monadnock to contrasting sources. Nonetheless, both explanations lack sufficient justification. Thus, popular and academic literature about

¹⁴³ Michelle Stahl, “Monadnock and the Visual Arts,” *Monadnock Perspectives*, 20, no. 2 (2011).

¹⁴⁴ Howard Mansfield, “The Shrinking of the Grand Monadnock” in *In the Memory House* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1993), 193–207.

¹⁴⁵ Rydant and Bayr, “The Grand (Mount) Monadnock,” 300.

Monadnock fall short of revealing how and why Monadnock has gained association with artistic invention.

Conclusion

In the foregoing review of literature, I have identified the literary genres that are pertinent to artistic invention in association with Monadnock, and I have discussed in each of them limitations that this study might help to resolve. In the field of environmental philosophy, I have reviewed various explanations of the trouble with Western ontological division and attendant efforts to promote an ecological understanding of being in the world. In these efforts, I have observed a necessary discrepancy between the intellectual medium by which authors convey their ecological ontological vision and the holistic mode of being that this vision promotes. In the field of environmental aesthetics, I have reviewed perennial conceptual and non-conceptual models, and I have demonstrated the ways in which Berleant's aesthetics of engagement logically precedes and thus encompasses all other non-conceptual aesthetic models. Nonetheless, I have observed in Berleant's aesthetic model a tension between the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of engagement that compromises the compatibility of each dimension with the other. Finally, I have reviewed literature in various fields that addresses artistic invention in association with Monadnock, and I have observed that this literature presumes established essentialist or constructivist explanations of the mountain's artistic appeal that resist thoroughgoing critical analysis. In various ways, this study of artistic invention in association with Monadnock helps to overcome the limitations associated with each of these pertinent genres of literature.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The work of fulfilling the research objectives that motivated this study requires use of a research approach that reveals the lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. On the one hand, development of a demonstrable explanation of how and why Monadnock has gained association with artistic invention requires investigation of artists' experience of appreciating the mountain and the ways in which this appreciation comes to inspire creative invention. Such an investigation might yield an explanation that follows from critical interpretation of empirical data rather than the undecidable essentialist or constructivist assumptions that the established corpus of Monadnock literature presumes. On the other hand, discovery of how the work of artistic invention in association with Monadnock conditions artists' appreciation of the mountain requires analysis of artists' experience of creating Monadnock art. Such analysis might disclose the evolution of artists' appreciation of the mountain as they create Monadnock art and reveal the ways in which the process of artistic invention prompts this coincidental evolution of appreciation. Hence, fulfillment of the primary objectives that motivated this study hinges upon the possibility of disclosing the lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock.

A hermeneutic phenomenological research design has the potential to fulfill both of the primary research objectives that motivated this study. In accordance with the purpose of explaining Monadnock's association with artistic invention, hermeneutic phenomenology

discloses the lived experience of research phenomena.¹ Thus, hermeneutic phenomenology has the potential to reveal in the lived experience of artists the ways in which appreciation of Monadnock inspires artistic invention and to illumine by extension the experiential origins of the ever expanding corpus of Monadnock art. In accordance with the purpose of discovering how the process of artistic invention in association with Monadnock conditions artists' appreciation of Monadnock, hermeneutic phenomenology addresses established ways of knowing as constitutive dimensions of lived experience and thus enables discernment of the ways in which these ways of knowing evolve in the course of the lived experience that they condition.² Therefore, hermeneutic phenomenology has the potential to reveal the particular ways in which lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock both presumes and conditions established ways of appreciating the mountain. Overall, the compatibility of the primary research objectives of this study with the general purpose of hermeneutic phenomenology and with a hermeneutic phenomenological understanding of lived experience warrants use of a hermeneutic phenomenological research design to investigate artistic invention in association with Monadnock.

In what follows, I will discuss the philosophical and the practical dimensions of hermeneutic phenomenological research. Following summary discussion of the historical development of hermeneutics and phenomenology respectively, I will discuss in the work of German philosophers Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg Gadamer the convergence of these

¹ Pilar Folgueiras-Bertomeu and Maria Paz Sandin Esteban, "The Research Question in Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Grounded Theory Research," *The Qualitative Report* 28, no. 5 (2023), 1458.

² Suddick et al., "The Work of Hermeneutic Phenomenology."

fields and the consequent establishment of hermeneutic phenomenology. Next, I will explain the research practices that follow from hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy, and I will discuss the particular ways in which I applied these practices in the process of investigating artistic invention in association with Monadnock. Finally, I will explain the hermeneutic circular approach to hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation, and I will discuss the ways in which I used this method of interpretation to discern meaning in the data that I gathered while conducting a series of interviews with each of my participants.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

European continental philosophy of the 19th and 20th centuries has given rise to various qualitative research approaches in the human and social sciences.³ One of these approaches is hermeneutic phenomenology—a human science method that emerged from a combination of two distinct branches of continental philosophy: hermeneutics and phenomenology.⁴ For the purpose of demonstrating the consonance of the objectives of my research and the philosophy that guided my research methods, I will, in what follows, discuss the historical evolution of hermeneutics and phenomenology and explain the ways in which these branches of continental philosophy combine to yield the methods of hermeneutic phenomenology.

³ Yvonne Sherratt, *Continental Philosophy of Social Science: Hermeneutics, Genealogy, and Critical Theory from Greece to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–16.

⁴ Mark D. Vagle, *Crafting Phenomenological Research* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2014), 37.

Hermeneutics

From the time of antiquity to the present, various authors have sought to explain the process of interpretation.⁵ With a principal focus on the interpretation of written texts, such authors have proposed diverse ideas about issues such as the relationship between interpretation and the conditions that give rise to it, the relationship between interpretation and meaning, the kinds of meaning that interpretation yields, and the extent to which interpreted meaning aligns with an objective understanding of truth.⁶ For the longest part of this time period, such reflection upon the process of interpretation served the practical purposes of establishing and justifying norms of interpretation within particular academic disciplines.⁷ In the 19th century, however, the philosophy of Friedrich Schleiermacher established interpretation as a subject of theoretical speculation in its own right independent of the practical concerns of any particular discipline.⁸ This theoretical turn would inspire subsequent thought that would come to constitute modern philosophical hermeneutics. Thus, hermeneutics has progressed from addressing specific practical issues of textual interpretation within individual academic disciplines to addressing universal theoretical issues of verbal and non-verbal interpretation that define human communication.

⁵ Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 2011), 1.

⁶ Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory*, 1–2.

⁷ Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory*, 3–6.

⁸ Werner G. Jeanrond, “The Development of Philosophical Hermeneutics: From Schleiermacher to Ricoeur” in *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (London: MacMillan Academic and Professional LTD., 1991), 44.

Before the 19th century, hermeneutical speculation generally arose from efforts to establish norms for interpreting biblical texts.⁹ Following the ancient Greek belief in the embeddedness of the human mind in a rational universe and the consequent potential for the interpretation of language to reveal universal truths, the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria observed multiple layers of meaning in the Hebrew Scriptures and conceived of interpretation as a process of discovering a deeper allegorical meaning beneath the literal meaning of biblical texts.¹⁰ While Philo identified this deeper meaning as a feature of biblical texts themselves, Augustine identified meaning as a product of the interaction of biblical texts and the self-consciousness of their interpreters.¹¹ Proper biblical interpretation, he suggested, requires the interpreter to keep in mind the basic principles of Christian faith and practice and thus to discover in biblical texts a meaning that agrees with established Christian doctrine.¹² In a manner similar to Augustine, Martin Luther identified inner experience as a factor that conditions the meaning of biblical texts; however, he opposed the requirement that readers adopt an interpretive standpoint authorized by the Church. His doctrine of *sola scriptura* identified the scriptures themselves as the exclusive media of Christian faith and practice.¹³ Finally, in opposition to Augustine and Luther's emphasis on the inner experience of the interpreter, 17th century philosopher Baruch Spinoza upheld the historical contingency of scriptural meaning.

⁹ Jeanrond, "The Development of Philosophical Hermeneutics: From Schleiermacher to Ricoeur," 12.

¹⁰ Jens Zimmerman, *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 20; Peter Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete of his Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 11.

¹¹ Hyoseok Kim, "Augustine's Biblical Hermeneutics: Its Three Characteristics and Significance for Today," *The Expository Times* 134, no. 3 (2022), 97.

¹² Kim, "Augustine's Biblical Hermeneutics: Its Three Characteristics and Significance for Today," 97.

¹³ Zimmerman, *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction*, 90–91.

That is, he argued that the meaning of particular scriptural passages hinged on the whole of the historical context in which they were composed and that interpretation, therefore, required an understanding of the history of biblical texts.¹⁴ Thus, premodern hermeneutical speculation in the field of biblical interpretation evolved from addressing meaning exclusively as a product of scriptural texts themselves to acknowledging the contingency of meaning upon such extratextual factors as the inner experience of the interpreter and ultimately the historical setting in which the text was composed.

During the Age of Enlightenment, growing awareness of the connection between context and meaning had the effect of broadening and diversifying the interpretive issues that gave rise to hermeneutical speculation. While biblical exegesis continued to inspire reflection upon the process of interpretation, increased appreciation of the challenges of understanding text and speech from historical and cultural settings that are other than those of the interpreter gave rise to new ideas about the work of interpretation. In opposition to the belief in objective and infallible knowledge, 18th century Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico argued that all truth statements presume particular cultural settings that are products of historical development.¹⁵ This historical and cultural contingency, he concluded, blurs any distinction that might be imagined between the interpreter and the object of interpretation.¹⁶ In a similar manner, German philosopher Johann

¹⁴ Norman O. Brown, "Philosophy and Prophecy: Spinoza's Hermeneutics," *Political Theory* 14, no. 2 (1986), 202.

¹⁵ David Ingram, "Vico's New Science of Interpretation: Beyond Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion" in *Issues in Interpretation Theory*, ed. Pol Vandeveld (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007), 217–218.

¹⁶ Massimo Lollini, "Vico's More than Human Humanism," *Annali d'Italianistica* 29 (2011), 382.

Martin Chladenius observed the interpretive problems that arise from cultural differences in the perception of phenomena. Proper understanding of texts and statements, he argued, requires thorough consideration of the point of view from which they arise.¹⁷ Finally, German philosopher Georg Friedrich Meier discussed the process of interpreting signs and thus moved hermeneutical speculation outside of the boundaries of written and verbal communication. In accordance with Vico and Chladenius, he observed the contextual contingency of meaning. Individual signs, he argued, gain their meaning from their relation to the other signs among which they appear.¹⁸ The Enlightenment-era interest in the connection between meaning and context helped to broaden the interests that inspire hermeneutical speculation and thus to establish hermeneutics as an independent philosophical discipline.

In the 19th century, hermeneutical speculation continued to presume progressively broader interpretive issues that extend beyond the parameters of any one academic discipline. Among the theorists who were instrumental in this trend of expansion were German philologists Friedrich August Wolf and Georg Anton Friedrich Ast.

Wolf conceived of interpretation as a scientific process that should yield a precise and certain understanding of the moral dimension of human nature. In accordance with both the method and the purpose of the natural sciences, he proposed a procedure for discovering in ancient Greek and Latin texts a truth that is rationally sound and thus “no less convincing than

¹⁷ Peter Szondi, *Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 49–52.

¹⁸ Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 56.

those of which the exact sciences are so justly proud.”¹⁹ Discernment of such truth, he argued, presumes a conspicuous interpretive method that incorporates linguistic and historical components. Thus, he argued that professional interpreters must attend carefully both to the meaning of the individual words and signs in classical texts and to the historical settings in which those texts were composed.²⁰ The work of considering each of these components from the standpoint of the other and incorporating all of them into a coherent explanation, argued Wolf, has the potential to afford a kind of scientific understanding of ancient humanity in particular and of human nature in general.²¹

On the other hand, Anton Friedrich Ast, a contemporary of Wolf, ascribed to the process of interpretation the more profound possibility of revealing the source of all things. Unlike Wolf, whose theory of interpretation emerged more exclusively from issues that were particular to the field of philology, Ast drew inspiration from the ideals of Romanticism.²² Therefore, his theory of interpretation presumes the particular Romantic belief in the “World Spirit”—a singular cosmogonic force that permeates the whole of reality and gains varied expression in all of the material and immaterial elements that reality comprises.²³ Ast’s supposition of a mutually constitutive relationship between the whole and the parts of reality grounds his account of the hermeneutic circle—a theory that would come to dominate subsequent work in the fields of

¹⁹ Jay Bolter, “Friedrich August Wolf and the Scientific Study of Antiquity,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* XXI (1980), 86.

²⁰ Bolter, “Friedrich August Wolf and the Scientific Study of Antiquity,” 86–87.

²¹ Bolter, “Friedrich August Wolf and the Scientific Study of Antiquity,” 87.

²² Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 12–22.

²³ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 13.

hermeneutics and hermeneutic phenomenology. As Ronald Bontekoe observes in the hermeneutics of Ast, “the individual [human] mind stands to the originative [World] spirit as a part stands to the whole: it receives its meaning by virtue of its participation in the intent of the whole; at the same time, the whole is actualized only through its expression in the parts.”²⁴ As a consequence of this mutually constitutive relationship between individual minds and the World Spirit, the work of comprehending any written text, argued Ast, requires explanation of the reciprocity between the product and the World Spirit that inspired it.

Based upon this standard of comprehension, Ast argued that interpretation of written texts should incorporate pursuit of the following three kinds of understanding: historical, grammatical, and spiritual.²⁵ Historical understanding refers to an awareness of the personal and broader cultural context in which a text was written.²⁶ Grammatical understanding refers to a comprehension of the language and the literary style of a text.²⁷ Finally, spiritual understanding refers to an appreciation of the ways in which the content and the form of a text manifest the World Spirit that inspired the text’s composition.²⁸ In accordance with the hermeneutic circle, each of these components of interpretation presumes an interpreter’s sense of the text as a whole. That is to say, the work of interpreting a text occurs against the backdrop of the interpreter’s precedent sense of the text as a whole. This established sense determines the interpreter’s

²⁴ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 13.

²⁵ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 18.

²⁶ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 18.

²⁷ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 18.

²⁸ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 18.

understanding of the individual components of the text, which in turn manifest the spirit of the text as a whole.

By proposing methods of interpretation that could be extricated from the interpretive issues of their discipline, Wolf and Ast established a foundation for the creation of modern hermeneutics.

Nineteenth century German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher advanced the first hermeneutic method that was applicable beyond the practical interpretive issues of a particular discipline and thus established modern philosophical hermeneutics.²⁹ Schleiermacher's hermeneutics both affirmed and opposed elements of Ast's principle of the hermeneutic circle. On the one hand, Schleiermacher identified the hermeneutic circle as a principle "of such consequence for hermeneutics and so incontestable that one cannot even begin to interpret without using it."³⁰ On the other hand, Schleiermacher opposed Ast's idea that the spirit of a text is wholly present in each of the text's parts and argued instead that "meaning is not vested in the individual parts of speech but in their connection."³¹ In accordance with this supposition, Schleiermacher proposed an interpretive method that focused primarily on the process of discerning the meaning of language.³²

²⁹ Michal Beth Dinkler, "Beyond the Normative/Descriptive Divide: Hermeneutics and Narrativity" in *Verstehen und Interpretieren: Zum Basisvokabular von Hermeneutik und Interpretationstheorie*, eds. Andreas Mauz and Christiane Tietz (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2020), 127.

³⁰ Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, edited by Heinz Kimmerle, translated by James Duke and Jack Forstman (Missoula: Scholar's Press, 1977), 195–196.

³¹ Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, 141.

³² Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 26.

Schleiermacher's interpretive method presumed a distinction between common and individual uses of language. Written texts, he observed, consist of features that conform to accepted linguistic conventions, on the one hand, and features that are peculiar to the expression of the author, on the other. Thus, he argued that comprehension of written texts required of two interconnected kinds of interpretation that constitute the poles of a hermeneutic circle: "grammatical" interpretation and "technical" or "psychological" interpretation.³³ Grammatical interpretation assesses the extent to which a written text conforms to the linguistic conventions of the historical era in which the text was composed. Naturally, such interpretation requires both a requisite mastery of the language in which a text was written and a thorough understanding of historical development of that language.³⁴ Technical or psychological interpretation, on the other hand, pursues a nuanced understanding of the author's personal use of language and syntax and an effort to discern the author's motivation for expressing himself in a peculiar manner.³⁵ Since recognition of an author's peculiar use of language presumes an understanding of contemporary linguistic convention, on the one hand, and observation of an author's deviation from conventional language use reinforces understanding of linguistic convention, on the other, Schleiermacher upheld the reciprocity of grammatical and technical interpretation and identified each as a pole on the hermeneutic circle.³⁶

³³ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 27.

³⁴ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 28.

³⁵ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 28.

³⁶ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 28–29.

Within both of these processes of linguistic interpretation, Schleiermacher observed a second hermeneutic circle that governs the process of discerning the genre of written texts. This hermeneutic circle consists of the poles of divination and comparison.³⁷ In the process of grammatical interpretation, divination requires interpreters to discern the meaning of the individual words and phrases of a text and comparison requires interpreters to observe points of similarity and difference between the meaning of particular words and phrases in one portion of text with the meaning of the same words and phrases in other portions of the same text.³⁸ In the process of technical interpretation, divination requires interpreters to imagine themselves as the author of a text and thus to categorize both the perspective of the author and the genre of the text while comparison assesses the appropriateness of a particular categorization by determining the extent to which the interpreted text conforms to others of the same supposed genre.³⁹ In accordance with the reciprocity of grammatical and technical interpretation, each of the processes of divination and comparison both presumes and informs the other.

In opposition to Wolf and Ast's shared conviction in the possibility for interpretation to furnish a kind of comprehensive understanding of written texts, Schleiermacher argued that all interpretation necessarily falls short of capturing some aspect of a written text that no interpretation can possibly circumscribe the whole of a text's meaning. Thus, he observed that

³⁷ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 33.

³⁸ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 33.

³⁹ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 33-34.

each new interpretive effort will necessarily prompt subsequent efforts to illumine some aspect of a text that preceding interpretations overlooked.

At the turn of the 20th century, German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey grounded hermeneutics in a theory of human existence and thus prefigured the transition toward ontology that would characterize hermeneutics of the 20th century.⁴⁰ In contrast to the Wolf, Dilthey presumed a distinction between the respective objectives and methods of interpretation in the natural sciences and interpretation in the humanities.⁴¹ While interpretation in the natural sciences pursues explanation of phenomena in the empirical world, he argued, interpretation in the humanities pursues understanding of the inner, lived experience of people.⁴² Dilthey's observation of this distinction and his concern about an increasing tendency to use natural scientific methods to interpret human subjects prompted him to establish an interpretive method for the humanities that was distinct from that of the natural sciences.

In the hermeneutics of Dilthey, "universal history" occupies the principal place that the World Spirit and language occupy in the respective hermeneutics of Ast and Schleiermacher. Dilthey conceives of this "universal history" as a story of humanity that human cultural productions collectively constitute.⁴³ The work of the humanities, argued Dilthey, is to construct

⁴⁰ C. Jason Throop, "Experience, Coherence, and Culture: The Significance of Dilthey's 'Descriptive Psychology' for the Anthropology of Consciousness," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 13, no. 1 (2002), 3.

⁴¹ Robert C. Scharff, "More than One 'Kind' of Science? Implications of Dilthey's Hermeneutics for Science Studies" in *Interpreting Dilthey: Critical Essays* ed. Eric S. Nelson (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 120.

⁴² Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 41.

⁴³ Ilse N. Bulhof, "Structure and Change in Wilhelm Dilthey's Philosophy of History," *History and Theory* 15, no. 1 (1976), 30–31.

this “universal history” by interpreting the human inventions that it comprises. Thus, interpretation in such fields as aesthetics, history, theology, political science, sociology, and literary criticism, among others, has the potential to disclose various features of the human story.

In opposition to the natural sciences, which pursue discovery of laws that govern the processes of the empirical world, the humanities, according to Dilthey, pursue a kind of subjective knowledge of the human mind or spirit. That is, they seek a primary understanding of “the emotions, dreams, thoughts, and desires” that motivated a particular human creation.⁴⁴ To describe such understanding, Dilthey used the German word *verstehen*, which refers to a kind of empathic comprehension that emerges from the work of imagining oneself into the lived experience (*erlebnis*) of an author.⁴⁵ Thus, in a manner that is reminiscent of Schleiermacher’s aforementioned notion of divination, Dilthey identified as the goal of humanistic interpretation the development of *verstehen* for the purpose of contributing to an ever clearer appreciation of “universal history.”

In a manner similar to Schleiermacher, Dilthey proposed multiple adaptations of the hermeneutic circle to explain the interpretive process. Interpretation that produces *verstehen*, he argued, consists of movement between the parts and the whole on multiple scales.⁴⁶ He argued that *verstehen* of a particular human creation emerges from an awareness of the interaction between the inner experience of an author and the outer medium by which the author seeks to

⁴⁴ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 41.

⁴⁵ Michael Ermarth, “The Transformation of Hermeneutics: 19th Century Ancients and 20th Century Moderns,” *The Monist* 64, no. 2 (1981), 182.

⁴⁶ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 47.

express their experience. The possibility of such awareness, according to Dilthey, emerges from the common structure of human experience and expression, which enables interpreters to appeal to their own experience and expression in the effort to understand the experiences of an author.⁴⁷ Thus, Dilthey observes the reciprocity between an interpreter's self-understanding and their understanding of others. Interpreters gain a clearer understanding of themselves, he argues, "by our understanding of other people—just as other people are understood through our own experience."⁴⁸ Further, he noted the mutual contingency of one's understanding of universal history, on the one hand, and one's understanding of the human inventions that such history comprises, on the other. Finally, he acknowledged the reciprocity of the humanities and the human spirit that they seek to illumine. Everything, he observed, "is determined by the relationship of *mutual dependence*."⁴⁹

Thus, from the time of antiquity to the 20th century, hermeneutics progressed from addressing interpretive issues that arose within particular academic disciplines to addressing the process of interpretation in general. Accompanying this increase in the breadth of hermeneutic discourse was a growing awareness of both the primacy of interpretation to the human condition and the contingency of interpreted meaning upon the personal experience of the interpreter. These developments set the stage for the emergence of Phenomenology in the early 20th century.

⁴⁷ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 48.

⁴⁸ John E. Grumley, *History and Totality: Radical Historicism from Hegel to Foucault* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 74.

⁴⁹ Wilhelm Dilthey, H.P. Rickman, ed., *Pattern and Meaning in History: Thoughts on History and Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1962), 94.

Phenomenology

In common with modern hermeneutics, phenomenology is a branch of European continental philosophy that seeks to elucidate the conditions and the processes of human knowledge.⁵⁰ Moreover, like hermeneutics, phenomenology upholds the contingency of knowledge upon the context in which knowledge is acquired and identifies the precedent experience of an interpreter as a primary factor that determines this context of interpretation.⁵¹ However, while hermeneutics focuses primarily upon the acquisition of knowledge in the process of interpreting written texts, phenomenology addresses the more rudimentary, lived experiential origin of knowledge in general and thus seeks to root knowledge in primary human engagement in the world.

At the turn of the 20th century, German philosopher Edmund Husserl established the discipline of phenomenology in the effort to overcome limitations that he observed in the opposing philosophical trends of naturalism and psychologism.⁵² According to Husserl, naturalism, which presumes that the empirical world operates in accordance with the principles of cause and effect, and psychologism, which identifies such principles as features of human psychology, both devote insufficient attention to the dimensions of lived experience that each presumes. Thus, in what would become a defining dictum of phenomenology, Husserl proposed

⁵⁰ Paul B. Armstrong, "Phenomenology" in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, eds. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁵¹ Julie Frechette, Vasiliki Bitzas, and Melanie Lavoy-Tremblay, "Capturing Lived Experience: Methodological Considerations for Interpretive Phenomenological Inquiry," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 19 (2020).

⁵² Genki Uemura, "The Ontology of Propositions in Husserl's *Prolegomena*," *Bulletin d'Analyse Phénoménologique* 6, no. 9 (2010), 1–2.

a return “to the things themselves!”⁵³ This renewed attention to things (i.e., phenomena) from the standpoint of lived experience as such, he argued, would reconcretize Western philosophy by rooting philosophical speculation again in the experience that underlies human cognition rather than in the concepts that emerge as a result of human cognitive activity.⁵⁴

To this end, Husserl identified the “lifeworld” (lebenswelt) as the proper point of departure for philosophical speculation.⁵⁵ Contrary to the rational conceptual bases of the naturalistic and psychologistic perspectives that he opposed, Husserl’s lifeworld comprises the primordial ideas, thoughts, and impressions that give rise to the cognitive activity by which we make sense of the world.⁵⁶ The defining feature of this lifeworld, argued Husserl, is intentionality—a concept that he used to describe the direction of human mental activity toward things in the empirical world. “Consciousness is always conscious of something,” argued Husserl.⁵⁷ Therefore, the lifeworld that this consciousness produces is essentially interactive. Thus, the work of disclosing the interaction between consciousness and the phenomena toward which consciousness is directed requires the suspension or “bracketing” of the dualistic conceptual presuppositions by which we have come to explain the world and our experience of it.⁵⁸ Husserl argued that such bracketing would disclose human experiential “essences” that precede interpretive activity.⁵⁹

⁵³ William McNeill, *The Fate of Phenomenology: Heidegger’s Legacy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020), 1.

⁵⁴ McNeill, *The Fate of Phenomenology: Heidegger’s Legacy*, 1.

⁵⁵ David Carr, “Husserl’s Concept of the Life-World,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (1970), 331.

⁵⁶ Carr, “Husserl’s Concept of the Life-World,” 331.

⁵⁷ Charles E. Scott, “Consciousness and the Conditions of Consciousness,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 25, no. 4 (1972).

⁵⁸ Shaun Gallagher, *Phenomenology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 43.

⁵⁹ Gallagher, *Phenomenology*, 49.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

In 1929, German philosopher Martin Heidegger published *Being and Time*—a book dedicated to Husserl that combined the defining features of hermeneutics and phenomenology and thus established the philosophical and social scientific discipline of hermeneutic phenomenology.⁶⁰ This discipline both affirms and opposes features of the two disciplines that it combines. In accordance with modern hermeneutics, on the one hand, hermeneutic phenomenology proposes a theory of interpretation. In accordance with phenomenology, on the other hand, hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to disclose the primordial features of lived experience. Nonetheless, in a manner unlike both of the fields that it combines, hermeneutic phenomenology addresses understanding as a primordial feature of human existence that gives rise to human experience.⁶¹ Thus, hermeneutic phenomenology transcends the particular interest in textual interpretation that defines modern hermeneutics and presumes the primordially of a kind of understanding that Husserl's phenomenology associated with cognitive activity.

⁶⁰ Friedrich-Wilhelm Von Herrmann, *Hermeneutics and Reflection: Heidegger and Husserl on the Concept of Phenomenology*, translated by Kenneth Maly (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 1. Heidegger's membership in the Nazi Party and his subsequent failure to renounce Nazism and the anti-Semitism that he expressed in his Black Notebooks have long stimulated controversy among scholars of Heidegger and of European continental philosophy. The continuity that scholars observe between Heidegger's Nazism and the whole of his philosophical project has, understandably, dissuaded constructive appeals to Heidegger's thought in contemporary philosophy. With these issues in mind, I appeal to Heidegger here not in the interest of perpetuating his ideas and the anti-Semitism with which they gained association, but rather with the intention of explaining the historical development of hermeneutic phenomenology – an approach to human science research that has evolved gradually away from the Heideggerian philosophy that first inspired it and that carries no necessary connection to anti-Semitism or any other of Heidegger's personal prejudices.

⁶¹ Carlton B. Christensen, "Heidegger's Representationalism," *The Review of Metaphysics* 51, no. 1 (1997), 86.

Heidegger's philosophy proposes the inextricability of human being and the world in which it occurs.⁶² To be, argued Heidegger, is to exist within a matrix of mutually constitutive connections with features of the particular time and place in which we find ourselves. It is not only to exist *within* a particular context, therefore, but to constitute the features of that context and to become who we are in their presence. In this process of mutual constitution, we and all of the other features of a given setting assume a role that belies the supposed dualism of subject and object. At once, we function as agents and benefactors of being—as subjects and objects of the world in which we find ourselves. Thus, in the terms of Heidegger, we are *thrown* into a world that surpasses our control and that forms our being, and we *project* into that world the activity by which we seek to improve our lives—activity that forms the being of other features of the world into which we are thrown.⁶³

Heidegger argues that this activity, however, presumes options that are contingent upon the world in which we find ourselves. Since we are thrown into the world of a given time and place—a world from which our being is inseparable—we have at our disposal only those options that our being in the world discloses to us. That is, we cannot pursue options that have no basis in the world in which we find ourselves. Naturally, this worldly contingency that defines our being both predisposes us to pursue certain experiences and precludes us from pursuing certain others. Moreover, such contingency, argues Heidegger, prompts us to interpret in a particular

⁶² Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Basic Assumptions," Boston University, 2007, accessed on August 29, 2023, <https://www.bu.edu/philo/files/2019/09/d-basic-assumptions.pdf>.

⁶³ Andreas Elpidorou and Lauren Freeman, "Affectivity in Heidegger I: Moods and Emotions in *Being and Time*," *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 10 (2015), 664.

way both the options that our being in the world discloses to us and the experiences that come from our pursuit of those options. Thus, our experience and our interpretation alike arise from the existential unity of our being and the world—an existential unity that determines the experiential and interpretive options that are available to us at any given moment.⁶⁴

Based upon this supposition, Heidegger established the foundation of a distinctive theory of interpretation that subsequent philosophers in the field of hermeneutic phenomenology would elaborate. Following from the aforementioned inseparability of being and a world that is always already meaningful, Heidegger upheld the inextricability of interpretation from being-in-the-world.⁶⁵ Thus, he diverged from the phenomenology of Husserl who presumed the universal reality of certain aspects of human consciousness that are primordial and transcendental. According to Husserl, these aspects of consciousness function independently prior to our engagement in the material world; however, they operate in conjunction with features of the material world to produce the *lebenswelt*, or “lifeworld,” that he sought to describe.⁶⁶ Against the supposition that some part of ourselves discerns meaning prior to and apart from our engagement in the world in which we find ourselves, Heidegger understood the existential unity of the world and our being in it as the point of departure for any process of interpretation. By constituting the fore-structure of our appreciation of a given phenomenon,

⁶⁴ Marcella Horrigan-Kelly, Michelle Millar, and Maura Dowling, “Understanding the Key Tenets of Heidegger’s Philosophy for Interpretive Phenomenological Research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 15, no. 1 (2016).

⁶⁵ Meindert E. Peters, “Heidegger’s Embodied Others: On Critiques of the Body and ‘Intersubjectivity’ in *Being and Time*,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 18 (2019), 448.

⁶⁶ Gallagher, *Phenomenology*, 159–160.

being-in-the-world, he argued, conditions beforehand both the meaning that we pursue and the approach that we use in the work of interpreting that phenomenon.⁶⁷

In accordance with his predecessors in the field of hermeneutics, Heidegger understood interpretation as a circular process in which the fore-structure and the lived experience of a given phenomenon are understood each from the standpoint of the other.⁶⁸ In this hermeneutic circle of interpretation, meaning emerges from the work of establishing accordance between the whole of the fore-structure and the details of the lived experience of a given phenomenon. This work comprises the revision of the fore-structure and the lived experience alike such that each reflects the other more sharply. Thus, meaning comes from a dialectical process of assessing and revising our precedent understanding from the standpoint of our lived experience, on the one hand, and our lived experience from the standpoint of our precedent understanding, on the other.⁶⁹ The meaning that emerges from this process, in turn, comes to constitute the fore-structure of future experience and interpretation. Since each interpretation helps to establish an ever more precise agreement between the fore-structure and the lived experience that constitute meaning, Heidegger understood the work of performing multiple interpretations of a given phenomenon as a kind of spiraling process in which each new interpretation delves ever deeper into the core of the phenomenon.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 72.

⁶⁸ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 73.

⁶⁹ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 73.

⁷⁰ Patrick A. Heelan, "The Scope of Hermeneutics in Natural Science," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 2, no. 2 (1998), 280–281.

Naturally, hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation begins with acknowledgement of the fore-structure that informs lived experience of a phenomenon. Although first proffered in the work of Heidegger, the concept of fore-structure gained more robust explication in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer.⁷¹ As I noted above, Heidegger conceived of the fore-structure of experience as the matrix of conditions that precede and capacitate interpretation. Moreover, he noted that these conditions fall into three related categories, which he identified as “fore-having” (*vorhabe*), “fore-sight” (*vorsicht*) and “fore-conception” (*vorgriff*).⁷² He defined “fore-having” as the precedent understanding that determines the way in which we approach the work of interpreting a given phenomenon, “fore-sight” as the category with which we identify the phenomenon, and “fore-conception” as the conceptual framework that we use to interpret the phenomenon.⁷³ While Gadamer, in turn, affirmed Heidegger’s concept of fore-structure, he identified all of its constituent features as products of human cultural conditioning. Thus, he argued that each of us inherits from the history and the traditions of human culture a kind of primordial prejudice that influences our appreciation of the world in which we find ourselves.⁷⁴ More specifically, this inherited prejudice conditions beforehand the opportunities and the meaning that our being in the world discloses to us. Naturally, our being in a particular cultural setting both affords us certain possibilities and deprives us of others that a different cultural

⁷¹ Lawrence K. Schmidt, Book Review: Adrian Costache, *Gadamer and the Question of Understanding: Between Heidegger and Derrida*. Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews, accessed on August 30, 2023, <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/gadamer-and-the-question-of-understanding-between-heidegger-and-derrida-2>.

⁷² Georgia Warnke, “The Hermeneutic Circle Versus Dialogue,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 65, no. 1 (2011), 91.

⁷³ Warnke, “On Failing to Hike Mount Monadnock,” 92–93.

⁷⁴ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 108.

setting, in turn, might afford us. Moreover, the prejudice of the culture in which we find ourselves comprises values, beliefs, ideas, and interests that determine the sources in which we discern meaning and the ways in which we respond to the meaning that we discern.⁷⁵ Thus, argues Gadamer, cultural prejudice constitutes the fore-having, the fore-sight, and the fore-conception that define the fore-structure of our being in the world.

Applying Hermeneutic Phenomenology

By virtue of the aforementioned inextricability that hermeneutic phenomenology upholds between being and the world, on the one hand, and being-in-the-world and interpretation, on the other, hermeneutic phenomenological research requires the disclosure and active engagement of established ways of knowing a subject of research. As I discussed earlier, such disclosure and active engagement are required of research participants and researchers alike; for, established ways of knowing constitute the fore-structure that, in turn, conditions the lived experience and the interpretive activity of both research participants and researchers. For the purpose of disclosing the fore-structure that gives rise to my interpretation and conditions the meaning that I will discover in the lived experience of others, I will, in what follows, convey the experiences and the commitments that, I believe, have prompted my interest in researching creative engagement with Monadnock.

While I identify my aforementioned personal experience of Monadnock as the source of my attention to the mountain, I attribute my interest in the lived experience of creative

⁷⁵ Gary Browning, *Modern Political Thought: The Question of Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 138.

engagement with Monadnock principally to the intellectual commitments that I developed as a student in the Master of Divinity program at Yale Divinity School. During the year that preceded my graduation from the program, I discovered the related fields of environmental theology and spiritual ecology. In the process of reading such authors as Thomas Berry, Carol Christ, Anne Marie Dalton, John Grim, Belden Lane, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Mary Evelyn Tucker and engaging in spiritual exploration of various natural settings, I arrived at two conclusions. First, I came to acknowledge that anthropogenic environmental degradation and ecological crisis are rooted in destructive theological presuppositions that might be acknowledged and revised in such a way that encourages environmental awareness and responsibility. Second, I came to recognize that my own experiences in natural settings, including Monadnock, were experiential points of reference for my understanding of theological concepts. Thus, I became aware of my subconscious tendency to associate such ideas as creation, grace, and salvation with my memory of various natural settings that I had visited.

After graduating from Yale, I resumed my career as a secondary school history teacher, and in the process of teaching Western intellectual history, I became aware of the reductivism of Western accounts of the relationship of human consciousness and the empirical world. This awareness would emerge each school year while I was teaching the philosophy of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. As I engaged my tenth grade European history students in discussion of such topics as Descartes' distinction of mind and matter and Kant's identity of truth and reason, the development of scientific materialism, and the gradual abstraction of Western European consciousness from the domain of an empirical world that became progressively more devoid of inherent meaning, I would recall my own awareness of the connection of theological principles and geographical places and the sense that I had gained in

Divinity School of an interaction between the inner and outer worlds of my experience.

Gradually, I became aware of a distinction between the basic features of my experience and the tenets of my cultural tradition, and I began to search for literature that might help me to make sense of this distinction.

This search led me to the work of such authors as David Abram, Erazim Kohak, and Ted Toadvine who introduced me to the philosophical school of phenomenology and to the possibility that Western thought had strayed from its basis in rudimentary human experience. Instead of emerging from experience as it is, Western reflection, I came to suppose, had come to presume unquestioned ideas that were ever more distant from the immediacy of lived experience. Among them were a distinction of matter and consciousness and a related equation of truth and reason, both of which had effectively undermined belief in the inherent connection of the inner and outer dimensions of human existence and devalued the material world in such a way that permitted its degradation. In addition to attuning me to this history of intellectual abstraction and its destructive consequences, philosophical phenomenology appealed to me as a standpoint from which to attend more carefully to the features of lived experience, to question accepted cultural presuppositions, and thus to recalibrate the ideas that we use to explain the relationship between human beings and the world that we inhabit. Thus, I came to recognize the possibility for phenomenological reflection to prompt renewed awareness of the interaction of consciousness and matter in lived experience and to challenge the Western intellectual dualism that, I believe, underlies environmental degradation and ecological crisis.

A growing interest in examining the primordial connection that philosophical phenomenology supposes between matter and consciousness motivated me to read widely in the field of environmental literature and to explore as many wild places as I could. From reading

other people's accounts of being in natural settings and from attending closely to my own experience of wild landscapes, I hoped to subvert the influence of Western cultural accounts of my relationship with the world around me and thus to discover a keener and more primary awareness of the reciprocity of my being and my natural surroundings. While the work of such authors as Rick Bass, Wendell Berry, Robin Kimmerer, John Muir, Gary Snyder, H.D. Thoreau, and Terry Tempest Williams demonstrated the kind of awareness and expression of immediate experience that I hoped to cultivate, the sojourns that I took in the wild landscapes of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, New Hampshire, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming afforded me the opportunity to discern the influence of Western cultural constructs upon my appreciation of the world around me, to probe these constructs, and to identify the most essential features of my experience.

This ongoing effort prompted me to enroll in the Environmental Studies PhD program at Antioch University New England, where I discovered once again the appeal of Monadnock. The mountain struck me first as I drove on route 10 into Keene to attend my first summer semester intensive session. In the twilight of that late spring evening, the outline on the horizon of Monadnock's craggy summit conjured my memory of hiking the mountain in winter. Soon thereafter, I came also to appreciate Monadnock through the medium of other people's experiences. On the recommendation of my academic advisor, I began to investigate the cultural history of the mountain and to appreciate the profound impact of Monadnock experiences on people who have viewed and visited the mountain. Moreover, I came to recognize that these experiences had inspired a sizable and diverse corpus of artistic invention that includes literature, visual art, music, and dance. Thus, I came to recognize that people in the presence of Monadnock

have long experienced a connection to place that challenges the distinction between consciousness and matter in the Western cultural tradition.

This recognition inspired me to investigate the phenomenon of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. By drawing attention to the lived experiential factors that inspire artistic invention in association with the mountain and to the ways in which the work of artistic invention, in turn, conditions appreciation of Monadnock, I sought to encourage greater awareness of a primordial, experiential connection of matter and consciousness and thus to challenge the Western cultural dualism that has helped to give rise to a reductive conceptualization of the human condition and a destructive appreciation of the environment. In accordance with the principles of hermeneutic phenomenological research, I will acknowledge and actively engage this overarching interest in the work of research and interpretation.

Research Design

The objective of hermeneutic phenomenological research to probe established conceptual interpretation and to disclose the essential experiences that such interpretation tends to eclipse presumes a gradual process of progressive discovery.⁷⁶ As the persistence of dualism in the Western cultural tradition attests, established concepts, particularly those that occupy a foundational position, resist identification and tend to masquerade as descriptors of lived experience. As a consequence, the work of penetrating such concepts requires processes of

⁷⁶ Rola Ajjawi and Joy Higgs, "Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate How Experienced Practitioners Learn to Communicate Clinical Reasoning," *The Qualitative Report* 12, no. 4 (2007), 623.

investigation and interpretation that are reflective and iterative.⁷⁷ At every point in the research process, researchers and participants alike must accept the possibility of discovering new meaning and must allow this meaning to condition the established understanding that prompts their interest in a phenomenon. Given the importance of reflection, iteration, and discovery in hermeneutic phenomenological research, these principles guided the strategies that I used to investigate and interpret the experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock.

The collaborative and exploratory nature of hermeneutic phenomenological research requires the recruitment of research participants who have undergone lived experience of the particular phenomenon of interest and who demonstrate a basic understanding of the purpose of phenomenological research, an interest in investigating the rudimentary features of their experience, and a capacity to observe and to express evasive aspects of their experience that frustrate easy articulation.⁷⁸ Contrary to other human research methods that require the recruitment of a large number of participants, phenomenological research demands the thorough investigation of a small number of participants.⁷⁹ With these requirements in mind, I used direct and social network recruitment methods to recruit four research participants.

Naturally, the work of investigating the lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock required me to recruit participants who create art in association

⁷⁷ Rasha Alsaigh and Imelda Coyne, "Doing a Hermeneutic Phenomenology Research Underpinned by Gadamer's Philosophy: A Framework to Facilitate Data Analysis," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20 (2021).

⁷⁸ Alexandra A. Lauterbach, "Hermeneutic Phenomenological Interviewing: Going Beyond Semi-Structured Formats to Help Participants Revisit Experience," *The Qualitative Report* 23, no. 11 (2018), 2883–2884.

⁷⁹ Theodore T. Bartholomew, Eileen E. Joy, Ellice Kang, and Jill Brown, "A Choir or Cacophony? Sample Sizes and Quality of Conveying Participants' Voices in Phenomenological Research," *Methodological Innovations* 14, no. 2 (2021), 3.

with the mountain. In the process of conducting preliminary research on the cultural history of Monadnock, I identified the following four categories of artistic invention in association with the mountain: literary, visual artistic, musical, and choreographic. These categories served as criteria for identifying viable research participants. Thus, each of the participants that I recruited actively engage in one of these four types of creative invention. My intention to address these creative categories as secondary expressions of the principal creative engagement that is the subject of my research made unnecessary the diversification of my participants based upon creative medium. Therefore, I used these categories as criteria for identifying, but not selecting, potential research participants.

After I selected my research participants, I solicited from each of them approval of the specific procedures that I used to investigate, interpret, and write about their lived experience of creative engagement with Monadnock. I explained to each of them my intention to create an audio recording of each of the interviews that I conduct and to use these recordings to create written transcripts that I would then interpret. Moreover, I explained to each participant the phenomenological analysis that I used to interpret interview transcripts, and I emphasized the extent to which such analysis requires the partnership of researchers and research participants in a collaborative process of discovering meaning. Finally, I reminded each participant that phenomenological research requires the disclosure of the immediate impressions, thoughts, and ideas that arise in lived experience, and I asked them if they prefer me to use their actual names or pseudonyms when I write about their experiences.

After I gained the informed consent of four research participants, I began the work of investigating their lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. As a guide in this work, I used Irving Seidman's "structure for in-depth phenomenological

interviewing.”⁸⁰ This structure engages the researcher in conducting with each participant three semi-structured interviews, each of which solicits description of a different component of lived experience according to hermeneutic phenomenology. Thus, Seidman’s “focused life history” interview seeks to illumine the fore-structure of lived experience, his “details of experience” interview pursues rich description of lived experience of the phenomenon under investigation, and his “reflection on the meaning” interview engages participants in a collaborative process of articulating the meaning that they discern in their lived experience of the phenomenon.⁸¹

In the focused life history interviews that I conducted, I sought to establish the fore-structure of each participant’s lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. Thus, I solicited description of the precedent experiences and the established ways of knowing that give rise to each participant’s lived experience of engaging creatively with the mountain. As Seidman observes, focused life history interviewing requires the interviewer “to put the participant’s experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time.”⁸² As a strategy for eliciting description of such experience, he recommends posing questions that open with “how” rather than “why.” “By asking ‘how?’” he submits, “we hope to have [participants] reconstruct and narrate a range of constitutive events in their past ... experience” and thus to place their present experience of a

⁸⁰ Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2013), 14.

⁸¹ Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 22–24.

⁸² Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 21.

phenomenon “in the context of their lives.”⁸³ With these objectives in mind, I used the following prompts in each of the focused life history interviews that I conducted: How did you come to discover your interest in (*artistic medium*)? How did you come to appreciate Monadnock? How did you come to connect your interest in (*artistic medium*) with Monadnock?

After I conducted focused life history interviews with all of my participants, I conducted a second round of interviews in which I investigated the details of my participants’ lived experience of creative engagement with Monadnock. In these interviews, I sought rich description of the most rudimentary moods, impressions, associations, thoughts, and ideas that constitute the lived experience of my participants as they create art in association with Monadnock. Thus, as Seidman observes, I “[strove], however incompletely, to reconstruct the myriad details of [my] participants’ experience.”⁸⁴ In an effort to delve beneath any established conceptual explanations that might influence my participants’ appreciation of their experience, I conducted, when possible, details of experience interviews while each of my participants engages in creative invention in association with Monadnock. In each of these interviews, I used the following prompts: How do you feel as you prepare to engage in (*artistic medium*)? As you engage in (*artistic medium*), what thoughts come to your mind? How does Monadnock appeal to you while you engage in (*artistic medium*)?

⁸³ Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 21.

⁸⁴ Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 22.

Finally, in a third round of interviews, I prompted my participants to reflect on the meaning of their creative engagement with Monadnock. These interviews engaged me and my participants in the collaborative work of identifying points of connection between their life histories, the details of their experience, and the meaning that they ascribe to their experience. As Seidman observes, “making sense or making meaning requires that the participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation.”⁸⁵ Further, he notes, “it also requires that they look at their present experience in detail and within the context in which it occurs.”⁸⁶ Thus, he concludes, “the combination of exploring the past to clarify the events that led participants to where they are now, and describing the concrete details of their present experience, establishes conditions for reflecting upon what they are now doing in their lives.”⁸⁷ To encourage my participants to identify these points of connection between the fore-structure, the details, and the meaning of their lived experience of creative engagement with Monadnock, I used the following prompts: How do you feel about Monadnock? What motivates you to create art in association with Monadnock? If you were to imagine your life as a narrative or a story that culminates with you engaging creatively with Monadnock, what formative moments would you include in this narrative to contextualize your interest in the mountain?

⁸⁵ Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 22.

⁸⁶ Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 22.

⁸⁷ Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 22.

In accordance with the method of semi-structured interviewing that I used in all of the interviews that I conducted, I supplemented my interview prompts with requests for clarification and specific questions that arise in the conversations that my prompts inspire. As Ravitch and Carl explain, “in semi-structured interviews, the researcher uses the interview instrument to organize and guide the interview but can also include specific, tailored follow-up questions within and across interviews.”⁸⁸ Further, they note that “the interview instrument includes the specific questions to be asked of all respondents, but the order of questions and the wording of specific questions and subquestions follow a unique and customized conversational path with each participant.”⁸⁹ Thus, in all of the interviews that I conducted, I regularly posed such questions as “Can you tell me more about that?” “Why do you use that particular word?” and “Can you tell me more about how that feels?” With such questions, I regularly encouraged my participants to articulate more precisely and more specifically the various dimensions of their experience and thus to delve ever more deeply beneath any concepts that my participants might have used to explain their experience of creative engagement with Monadnock. Moreover, the particular nature of each participant’s experience helped to determine the order in which I submitted the prompts in each interview.

Interpretation

⁸⁸ Sharon M. Ravitch and Nicole Mittenfelner Carl, *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2016), 154.

⁸⁹ Ravitch and Carl, *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological*, 154.

In accordance with the philosophy of Heidegger and Gadamer, hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation is a process of establishing complementarity between the various dimensions of a given research project. This process consists of a circling or spiraling interpretive movement back and forth between a research project's most specific and the most general constitutive features.⁹⁰ As researchers engage in this hermeneutic circular interpretive process, they discern connections between the data that they have gathered and established ways of knowing, and they revise their understanding of this data and these established ways of knowing so as to establish coherence between them.⁹¹ Ultimately, therefore, hermeneutic circular interpretation yields a body of knowledge that consists of complementary components each of which can be understood from the standpoint of all others.

The work of establishing complementarity between the components of this particular research project required an iterative hermeneutic circular process of interpretation on multiple scales. In addition to involving the establishment of complementarity among the dimensions of each of the specific topics that this research study addresses, this interpretive process involved the establishment of a more general coherence between the major topics themselves. By means of this interpretive process, therefore, I discerned a mutually informative connection between artistic invention in association with Monadnock, Berleant's aesthetics of engagement, and ecological ontology and I interpreted each of these dimensions of my research project from the standpoint of the other two so as to bring each of them into alignment with the other two.

⁹⁰ Suddick et al., "The Work of Hermeneutic Phenomenology," 3.

⁹¹ Theodore George, "Hermeneutics," (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2021, accessed on August 31, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=hermeneutics>).

In what follows, I will explain the methods that I used to establish coherence within and between these topics. My explanation will proceed from addressing the application of these methods in the interpretation of increasingly more general features of my research project. Thus, I will begin by explaining the methods that I used to interpret the specific dimensions of the lived experiential data that I gathered on artistic invention in association with Monadnock and proceed from there to explaining the methods that I used to establish coherence between this lived experiential data and Berleant's aesthetics of engagement, on the one hand, and between both of these dimensions of my research project and ecological ontology, on the other. Although the inductive structure of my discussion suggests a unilateral process of aligning the general features of my research project with the specific, my interpretive process conformed to the bilateral requirements of hermeneutic circular interpretation. Thus, while I revised the aesthetic and ontological dimensions of my research project so as to establish complementarity between them and the lived experiential data that I gathered, I also revised my understanding of this data to establish complementarity between them and the aesthetic and ontological dimensions of my research project. This iterative interpretive movement back and forth between the specific and general features of my research project ultimately yielded a body of knowledge each dimension of which complements all others.

Interpretation of Artistic Invention in Association with Monadnock

After I conducted three rounds of interviews with all of my participants, I used audio recordings of each interview to create written transcripts that I used in the process of interpretation. As I reviewed these transcripts, I aimed to establish on multiple scales coherence of the lived experiential data that I had gathered in my interviews. In addition to developing an understanding of the whole of each particular interview that complemented all of its specific

features, I worked to develop from all three of my interviews with each participant an understanding that cohered with the specific dimensions of each interview and from all of the interviews that I conducted with all of my participants an understanding that complemented both the experience of each participant and the specific features that each participant's experience comprised. To establish this multidimensional coherence, I made iterative use of philosopher Max van Manen's phenomenological analysis, an interpretive method that consists of three steps each of which addresses lived experiential data on a different scale: the detailed reading approach, the selective reading approach, and the wholistic [sic.] reading approach.⁹²

First, I used the detailed reading approach—the most specific of van Manen's three phenomenological analytical approaches—to interpret the individual sentences that constitute my interview transcripts. As van Manen explains, the detailed reading approach involves “look[ing] at every single sentence or sentence cluster and ask[ing], ‘What may this sentence or sentence cluster be seen to reveal about the phenomenon or expression being described?’”⁹³ In accordance with this objective, I considered how and what each sentence of each interview transcript revealed about the phenomenon of artistic invention in association with Monadnock.

Next, I used the selective reading approach to interpret longer portions of each of my interview transcripts. As van Manen explains, the selective reading approach involves “read[ing] a text several times and ask[ing], ‘What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or

⁹² Max van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 319–323.

⁹³ van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*, 320.

revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?”⁹⁴ As I considered these larger portions of text, I identified passages that disclosed the phenomenon of artistic invention in association with Monadnock with particular clarity so that I might later include these passages in my explanation of the meanings that I discerned in my interview transcripts.

Finally, I used the wholistic [sic.] reading approach to interpret the entirety of each interview transcript and ultimately to develop an understanding of the whole corpus of the data that I had gathered. As van Manen explains, the wholistic [sic.] reading approach involves “attend[ing] to the text as a whole and ask[ing], ‘How can the eidetic, originary, or phenomenological meaning or main significance of the text as a whole be captured?’”⁹⁵ Thus, I reviewed the whole of each of my interview transcripts and I discerned what each of them individually and all of them collectively revealed about the phenomenon of artistic invention in association with Monadnock.

In addition to establishing consonance between the parts and the whole of the corpus of experiential data that I gathered, I worked to establish consonance between this corpus of experiential data and a number of artistic compositions that my participants created in association with Monadnock. As a criterion for determining which of these compositions to incorporate into my interpretive process, I appealed to the identity that my participants observed between their appreciation of the mountain and specific Monadnock compositions that they

⁹⁴ van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*, 320.

⁹⁵ van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*, 320.

created. Thus, I confined my attention to Monadnock compositions that my participants identified as expressive of their own experience of appreciating the mountain. In this manner, I worked to ensure that the Monadnock compositions that I interpreted were pertinent to the phenomenon that my research addresses.

As I engaged in each of these interpretive processes, I worked to establish consonance between the phenomenal meanings that I discerned and the fore-structure of my participants' lived experience. I pursued this consonance by incorporating into my process of interpretation consideration of all that I had learned about the biography and the work of my participants during the focused life history interview that I conducted with each of them. In the interest of ensuring the hermeneutic phenomenological legitimacy of the meanings that I discerned in each participant's lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, I interpreted them from the standpoint of relevant biographical information and I interpreted this biographical information, in turn, from the standpoint of the meanings that I discerned. This bilateral interpretive process allowed me to revise my understanding of each participant's phenomenal experience and each participant's biography so as to establish consonance between them and thus to ensure that the meaning that I discovered aligned with the phenomenological ontology of Heidegger and Gadamer.

In the interest of developing a coherent understanding of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, I performed each of these interpretive processes repeatedly so that I might establish complementarity between my understanding of the parts and the whole of the corpus of data that I had gathered. On each occasion that I engaged in this process of phenomenological analysis, I considered the conclusions that each reading approach had yielded from the standpoint of the conclusions that I had drawn from all others. When I observed a point of

inconsistency between any two conclusions that I had drawn, I revised one or both of them such that they complemented each other. By means of this iterative interpretive process, I developed an understanding of artistic invention in association with Monadnock the whole of which cohered with each of its component parts.

Interpretation of Artistic Invention in Association with Monadnock in Conjunction with Established Ways of Knowing

As I developed this coherent phenomenal understanding, I expanded gradually the scope of my interpretation so that I might consider the phenomenon of artistic invention in association with Monadnock in conjunction with established ways of knowing that pertained to the understanding that I was developing. Following a prolonged period of reflection upon this emerging understanding in conjunction with various ideas in the environmental humanities, I came to recognize that what I was discovering about artistic invention in association with Monadnock pertained most directly to work in the fields of environmental aesthetics and ecological ontology.

After focusing my attention upon these fields, I engaged in the deductive interpretive process of identifying work in each of them that pertained most directly to the phenomenal understanding that I was developing. This process prompted me ultimately to interpret my understanding of artistic invention in association with Monadnock in conjunction with Arnold Berleant's nonconceptual environmental aesthetics of engagement and with an interdisciplinary corpus of ecological ontological accounts.

In accordance with the means by which I developed a coherent understanding of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, I used a hermeneutic circular interpretive method to establish consonance between this understanding and each of the established ways of knowing in

conjunction with which I interpreted it. Thus, I considered and revised my emerging understanding and these established ways of knowing each from the standpoint of the other until the parts and the whole of each came to cohere with the parts and the whole of the other.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the phenomenological data that I gathered and the hermeneutic circular method that I used to interpret them yielded a body of knowledge that consists of mutually revelatory components. While Berleant's aesthetics of engagement disclosed the environmental aesthetic dimensions of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, artistic invention in association with Monadnock, in turn, both revealed and resolved certain limitations in Berleant's aesthetic model. Moreover, while ecological ontology identified artistic invention in association with Monadnock as a mode of being in the world, artistic invention in association with Monadnock revealed and resolved a point of tension between the intellectual medium and the holistic message of ecological ontology. Thus, the knowledge that my research yielded both fulfilled and surpassed the objectives that I pursued.

CHAPTER IV: THE FORE-STRUCTURE AND THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF ARTISTIC INVENTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH MONADNOCK

Introduction

As I discussed in the preceding chapter, hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy identifies meaning as an essential component of lived experience. Therefore, among the experiential dynamics that a hermeneutic phenomenological study seeks to disclose are the meanings that help to constitute participants' lived experience of the phenomenon under investigation. In collaboration with research participants, the researcher identifies these meanings and then interprets them in the light of the precedent events, circumstances, and ways of knowing that constitute the fore-structure of each participant's lived experience of the phenomenon.

While the "focused life history" interviews that I conducted disclosed the fore-structure of each participant's lived experience of artistic engagement with Monadnock, the "details of experience" and "reflection on the meaning" interviews revealed the basic thoughts, feelings, emotions, and meanings that constitute lived experience according to hermeneutic phenomenology. In the process of performing a phenomenological theme analysis of written transcripts of these latter two interviews that I conducted with each participant, I worked to discern themes that describe at once and with equal accuracy features that are particular to the lived experience of individual participants and features that are common to the experience of multiple participants.

Instead of revealing themes that describe coincident dimensions of a static and immediate experience, this prolonged and iterative process of interpretation ultimately illumined several experiential phases. While various themes emerged during the work of interpretation, none of these themes describes an experiential dimension that pervades artistic engagement with

Monadnock; rather, each theme describes a particular experiential moment that proceeds from earlier artistic engagement and gives rise to the artistic engagement that follows. Thus, contrary to my expectation, the coherence between parts and whole that I pursued in the work of hermeneutic circular interpretation emerged as I came to understand artistic engagement with Monadnock as an evolving experiential process rather than an immediate experiential event.

I came to discover that this experiential process, in turn, consists of five phases that my participants experienced in the following order: first encounter, abstract appreciation, existential understanding, sustained attention, and continuity. In accordance with the purpose of hermeneutic phenomenological research to reveal the rudimentary lived experience of a phenomenon, these phases describe moments in the interaction of the subjectivity of my participants and the physical geography of Monadnock. Thus, each of these phases bridges any distinction that might be imagined between the immaterial and the material dimensions of human experience, and none of these phases addresses either experiential dimension in isolation from the other.

In what follows, I will discuss various factors that helped to give rise to the meaning that I discerned in the process of gathering and interpreting information about artistic engagement with the mountain. Thus, I will offer summary explanation of any biographical information about each of my participants that is pertinent to their experience of engaging artistically with Monadnock, and I will describe my experience of interacting with each participant before explaining each experiential phase and discussing the ways in which it aligns with the lived experience of my participants.

Biographical Synopses

As I discussed in Chapter III, hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy upholds the inextricability of precedent experience and lived experience. According to the philosophy of Heidegger and Gadamer, our established ways of knowing constitute the fore-structure of our being-in-the-world, and this fore-structure is always already conditioning our lived experience by prompting us to appreciate certain rudimentary meanings and by precluding us from appreciating others.¹ These philosophical suppositions underlie two methodological requirements. First, any effort to interpret a phenomenon from the standpoint of hermeneutic phenomenology requires preliminary investigation of the fore-structure of each participant's lived experience of the phenomenon. Second, Heidegger and Gadamer's insistence that the circumstances in which interpretation occurs condition the meaning that interpretation yields requires the interpreter to disclose any factors in the processes of gathering and interpreting data that might have influenced the conclusions that the interpreter drew from these processes. In what follows, I will work to fulfill both of these requirements by explaining pertinent biographical information that I learned during the "focused life history" interviews that I conducted with each participant and by disclosing contextual information that might have conditioned the meaning that I drew from each of these interviews. Thus, I will construct the fore-structure of each participant's lived experience of artistic engagement with Monadnock and establish a foundation for my own interpretive process.

¹ Lavery, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations," 9–10.

Jill Fischman

Early in the process of developing my research topic and conceiving the approach that I would use to interpret it, I discovered monadnockart.org—a website that an organization named Monadnock Art / Friends of the Dublin Art Colony publishes to promote the work of artists living in the Monadnock region. The website serves as kind of virtual gallery, publishing images of a collection of works, a biographical abstract, and the contact information of each of its member artists. This website would prove helpful to me, as it introduced me to two of the artists whom I would eventually recruit for participation in my research study. One of these artists is Jill Fischman—a painter and photographer who lives and works in Jaffrey. Although my decision to contact Jill arose from my mistaken interpretation of one of her paintings, my error proved fortuitous, as she would ultimately introduce me to the experiential dynamics of a kind of artistic engagement with Monadnock that I had failed to consider while I was planning my research.

In a manner similar to most of the artists whom I interviewed, Jill has maintained a lifelong interest in her craft. “I was creating in the womb, without a doubt,” she stated after I asked her how long she had been interested in painting and photography. She attributes her artistic interests principally to her mother who introduced Jill to the creative and the commercial dimensions of fine art. On the one hand, Jill describes her mother as “a great painter, sculptor, [and] illustrator” whose artistic excellence motivated Jill at a young age to pursue her own artistic interests. On the other hand, Jill regards her mother as a shrewd business owner whose gallery in Long Island, NY introduced Jill to various influential artists. Jill remembers her mother traveling “the world to get art on commission and purchase that she would show in her gallery.” The artists who produced this work, Jill recalls, were “world renowned, [whom] I would meet and go to their studios in Manhattan.”

Jill's exposure early in life to the production and the business of art would come to define her future professional pursuits. Her interest in both of these dimensions of art would prompt her to enroll in the School of Visual Arts (SVA) in Manhattan. As an art student, Jill nurtured her interest in both the fine and the commercial arts by studying painting and graphic design. Following her graduation from SVA, however, the success of the designs that she created as a student motivated Jill to focus her professional ambitions on the commercial arts. During the following twenty years, Jill worked as an editor of art direction and design for various international publications based in New York including *Harper's Bazaar*, *Glamour*, *Mirabella*, *European Travel & Life*, and *Parents*. Jill attributes her professional success principally to her capacity to understand people's emotions and to express them visually. Such abilities, she stated, are "a must for someone to work in the environment that I worked in." She explained further that an art editor needs to create art that "emit[s] the feeling of what's written so the viewer understands what it's about before they read." Ironically, this "very good understanding of people's emotions" that allowed Jill to succeed as an art editor would also motivate Jill to resign from the world of commercial art.

Of all of the subjects that I discussed with Jill, none occupied more of our time together than the transformative experience that Jill underwent near the end of her art editorial career. In addition to prompting Jill's departure from the commercial art world of New York City, this experience would motivate Jill again to pursue the interest in painting and photography that she developed early in life. As we discussed the challenges that she faced and the means by which she ultimately came to derive creative energy from them, I came to recognize that Jill was still struggling to articulate how and why her work as an art editor had taken such an emotional toll on her—one that would set the course of the next twenty-three years of her life to date and would

come thoroughly to condition her experience of artistic invention. In an effort both to help Jill gain a clearer understanding of her past and to construct the fore-structure of her present experience of artistic engagement with Monadnock, I offered periodically my own interpretation of Jill's experience and asked her to comment on the accuracy of my understanding. This iterative dialogical process eventually yielded a clear explanation of the circumstances that brought her to live and paint in the shadow of Monadnock.

At various points in our conversation, Jill described the sense of inhibited creativity that she came to feel near the end of her commercial art career. "I felt very blocked with my background [and] deadlines," she stated with reference to her work as an art editor. "I was on deadlines all the time," and "I wanted so desperately to gain ... freedom." As I came to understand later in our conversation when Jill was recounting her decision to resign from the commercial art world of New York City, to move to southwestern New Hampshire, and to begin her present career as a studio artist, Jill's aforementioned abilities to understand people's emotions and to foresee how people will react to a given piece of literary or visual art—abilities that made her a successful commercial artist—had come to isolate her artistic skill from her sense of creative inspiration and thus to prevent her from accomplishing the liberating self-expression that she pursued. During her career as an art editor, Jill had become accustomed to appreciating her own work principally from the standpoint of an imagined audience. It seems to me that Jill's career required her to maintain a kind of critical distance from her work—to evaluate her work based upon the extent to which it conformed to a standard that was other than her own. When she finally left her career as an art editor, this critical distance came to inhibit her sense of creative inspiration. "Being me and not being critical of myself was the hardest," she

remembered. “That was the hardest hurdle to overcome. I might be critical, but nothing like I was, because otherwise I could not produce.”

Following her move to New Hampshire, Jill’s capacity for authentic creative expression emerged gradually as she worked to resist her habit of self-criticism. “I kept saying to myself ... ‘don’t criticize yourself, don’t criticize yourself,’” she recalled. Jill’s commitment to “unblocking” or “unraveling” her creative inspiration came gradually to yield the sense of liberation that she pursued. Eventually, the experience of creating art “felt great. All I can say is that it’s emotion that is difficult to define, but it’s a freedom.” This sense of freedom came from Jill’s willingness to “[allow] myself to be free.”

One of the most significant moments in Jill’s prolonged pursuit of creative freedom occurred when she painted in the presence of Monadnock. She was then living and working in Marlborough in a house that afforded magnificent views of the mountain. In an effort to give artistic expression to the turbulent emotions that she was feeling at the time, Jill moved a portion of her studio onto the deck of her house and painted a series of self-portraits. “It was just instantaneous,” she remembered. “One portrait after the next. I would [paint] every day. Sometimes I’d do two a day.” She went on to explain that the portraits “don’t look like me, but they all look like me because of my emotions.” In the process of painting faces other than her own that express her emotional experience, Jill underwent what “really was a catharsis”—one that afforded her “freedom” and “strength” and conditioned the style of her subsequent artwork. “Now my work is colorful and happier,” she said with reference to the paintings that she has produced after she finished her series of self-portraits. As I would come later to discover, the presence of Monadnock in the immediate background as she painted her self-portraits conditioned her experience of creating them. She attributes to “the majestic mountain” on the

other side of her easel the “freedom” and the “strength” that she gained while painting her self-portraits.

More recently, a form resembling the ridgeline of Monadnock took shape unexpectedly on a canvas that Jill was painting during a fundraising event for the Jaffrey Civic Center. Organizers of the event had invited Jill to produce in one hour the whole of a finished painting while a pianist in the same room performed the music of various classical composers. Upon its completion, the painting would be revealed to the people in attendance and auctioned to the highest bidder to raise money for the civic center. Jill accepted the invitation knowing that her capacity to conceive and finish a painting so quickly would require her to harness both the ability that she had developed as an art editor to work against a fast approaching deadline and the senses of freedom and strength that she had cultivated since she retired from her career as a commercial artist. In opposition to the self-criticism that once distanced Jill from her creative capacities, Jill maintained a sharp focus during the whole of the hour that she was given to paint. As soon as the pianist began to play and “I was putting my paints on my pallet, I was ... in another zone.” “The music was playing and I’m putting the colors down, and oh, it was just reverberating through my body, my soul,” she remembers. When I asked Jill why she ended up painting a form that resembles Monadnock, she responded, “the mountain just spoke to me internally, spiritually. ... It’s all in my body and my mind.”

Ernest Hebert

The idea of requesting Ernest Hebert’s participation in my research study came to me late in the process of interviewing a participant whom I had already recruited. In accordance with the practice of snowball sampling—a human science recruitment strategy in which the researcher asks participants to recommend other potential recruits—I requested from each of the three

participants whom I had recruited already a list of people who have engaged artistically with Monadnock and who might be interested in exploring the experiential dynamics of their own artistic engagement. Among the names that I received, “Ernest Hebert” drew my immediate attention. As a child, I had observed this name on the spines of books on my family’s living room book shelves, and I could name a number of Hebert’s novels without having read them. The idea of recruiting Hebert appealed to me, as I had yet to interview anyone who was born and raised in the presence of Monadnock, as Hebert was, and I had yet to learn about the experience of addressing the mountain in works of fiction. As I discussed in Chapter III, my research objectives preclude me from selecting research participants based upon their place or origin or their preferred artistic medium; nonetheless, I contacted and ultimately recruited Hebert, because I believed that his familiarity with the mountain and his work of addressing Monadnock in a novel—of working the mountain into the rich, complex, and multifaceted world of a long work of fiction—would disclose experiential dimensions of artistic engagement with Monadnock that work in other artistic media from the standpoint of a less intimate acquaintance with the mountain might reveal less precisely.

In accordance with my expectation, Ernest described his particularly strong and rudimentary sense of connection to Monadnock. “In a way,” he stated, “I have to credit Mount Monadnock with my very existence.” He went on to explain the way in which the mountain gave rise to the circumstances of his parents’ first acquaintance. “Back in 1939,” he explained, “my mother was what today we would call a nanny for two children of a branch of the famous New England Cabot family.” In this role, she lived and worked in a mansion on the grounds of an estate in Dublin that was “built high up on a hill to command a spectacular view of Mount Monadnock.” During her time on the Cabot estate, Ernest’s mother befriended a maid who also

lived and worked in the mansion. “One day,” Ernest recalled, “the maid’s boyfriend arrived on a motorcycle from Keene. Accompanying him was another man on another motorcycle. The maid persuaded my mom to double-date with stranger, Elphege Hebert, my future father.” Thus, the appealing views of Monadnock that the estate afforded motivated the Cabot family to use the mansion as their primary residence, to employ a staff that included Ernest’s mother, and thus to initiate the circumstances that would bring Ernest into the world.

Unlike all of my other research participants who were born and raised outside of the Monadnock region and who came to appreciate the mountain only after they had developed an aptitude in their preferred artistic medium, Ernest’s birth and childhood in Keene afforded him a sense of familiarity with Monadnock long before he came to discover his interest in writing. Initially, the mountain was so much a part of the world he knew that he took it for granted. “Growing up in Keene,” he remembers, “I never gave much thought to the mountain. It was just there. In fact, I never climbed it until I reached adulthood.” With the passing of time, however, this unconscious sense of familiarity evolved into the profound and emotional appreciation for Monadnock that Ernest developed later in life.

Unlike the view of Monadnock, the process of writing remained foreign to Ernest until after he gained admission to Keene State College. “I must be a late bloomer or a blooming idiot,” he remarked, “because I never wrote a word outside of high school assignments until I was age 23, a freshman at Keene State College.” By then, he had served for six months in the U.S. Army Reserves and worked for three and a half years as a central office equipment installer for the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, but he had never written an essay. As a consequence, “the course that scared me the most when I started,” he recalls, “was a required Freshman Composition class.” In spite of his fear, Ernest wrote a profile of one of his best

friends that earned the commendation of his professor. “The instructor, Francgon Jones, gave me an A+, called me into his office and told me that I had writing talent.” This encouragement combined with Ernest’s experience of reading T.S. Eliot’s poem “Preludes” motivated Ernest to pursue a career in writing. “I was so moved by that work,” he remembers, “that I thought: ‘If I could do for other people what T.S. Eliot has just done for me, my life would have meaning.’ With those words in my head, I decided right then and there to become a writer.”

This decision began to yield Ernest significant literary success beginning before he graduated from Keene State College. During his junior year, the second short story that he had ever written was published in a national magazine called “Cavalier.” Following a brief tenure as a graduate student in Stanford University’s creative writing program, Ernest returned to New Hampshire and worked as a journalist, publishing articles in the *Keene Sentinel*, *Business New Hampshire Magazine*, the *New Hampshire Times*, and the *Boston Globe* and winning two Journalism Excellence Awards from United Press International in 1972. Seven years later, in 1979, Ernest published *The Dogs of March*, which won a citation from the Hemingway Foundation for excellence in a first novel. In addition to being his first novel, *The Dogs of March* was the first of the Darby Chronicles—a series of seven novels all of which are set in the fictional town of Darby, New Hampshire. In addition to the Darby novels, Ernest would go on to write four other novels, a number of non-fiction works, and most recently a collection of poems. Two of his novels, *Mad Boys* and *The Old American*, won the Outstanding Fiction Award from the New Hampshire Writers Project, and his novel *Spoonwood* won an Independent Publisher Award for best regional novel in the northeast. His literary achievement earned him an Honorary Master’s Degree from Dartmouth College and an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Keene State College.

Ernest's prolific literary career helped to prompt his success as a college professor. Ernest began his teaching career in 1984 at his alma mater, Keene State College, where he served for two years as a writer in residence and professor of creative writing. In 1987, he accepted a post at Dartmouth College as a Visiting Assistant Professor of English. Two years later, in 1989, he became the first faculty member of Dartmouth to gain tenure as a fiction writer and assumed the title of Professor of English, which he held for the following 25 years.

Throughout his literary career, Monadnock has consistently inspired Ernest's creative attention. "I write about Monadnock in the inferential way of a fiction writer," he observes. Thus, in his novels, the mountain rarely gains the kind of sustained attention that it would inspire from Ernest himself on that day when he viewed it from the landfill on West Hill in Keene. As a defining feature of the geography of Darby, the fictional town in which all of Ernest's *Darby Chronicles* are set, Monadnock summons the kind of passive acknowledgement that it gained from Ernest when he was a child; "It [is] just there," as Ernest noted, and it is appreciated most often as the setting of a failed agricultural experiment. "In the seven novels of the *Darby Chronicles*" he explains, "I refer to the local mountain as Abare's Folly. . . . Abare is the phonetic spelling of the French pronunciation of Hebert. . . . In the *Darby* books the 'folly' of Abare's Folly is believed to be attempting to farm above the 2000-foot level." Occasionally in the *Darby Chronicles*, however, Monadnock summons a profound kind of psycho-spiritual awareness in Hebert's characters. For example, in *Live Free or Die*—the fifth novel in the *Darby Chronicles*—the protagonist Frederick Elman views Monadnock from a landfill in the fictional town of Tuckerman:

The view of Mount Monadnock was magnificent. Beyond the tan earth and blowing newspapers and other trash, the mountain rose up like a figure with outstretched hands. It reminded him of his mother's statue of the Virgin. The mountain was immense; it was God. It was what his father had meant. Look at the mountain. Just as he had actually

never noticed himself grow, he had never noticed the mountain. All those years, when he could have been seeing something, he had missed out.²

Elman's view of Monadnock represents the status of the mountain in Ernest's novels in general. Although most often taken for granted, the Monadnock occasionally stimulates a profound sort of spiritual insight.

Ernest has engaged Monadnock also in his career as a college professor. As a consequence of a childhood incident that might have killed him, Ernest developed "a morbid fear of heights" that dissuaded him from climbing the mountain more than twice. He describes each of his two experiences of ascending Monadnock as "a kind of force march that I made myself do." During one of these ascents, he delivered a lecture to university students who were studying his novel *Whisper My Name*. He remembers that he "enjoyed the rocks, the flora, my fellow climbers, but the grand vistas left me with an unpleasant touch of vertigo." Overall, he concludes, "I appreciate the mountain in the abstract."

Mary Iselin

Monadnockart.org—the aforementioned website that introduced me to the work of Jill Fischman—also acquainted me with the paintings of Mary Iselin. A perusal of Jill and Mary's paintings on the website revealed to me points of similarity and difference in their art that interested me and thus motivated me to work to recruit both of them directly. On the one hand, I noted that both artists work primarily with oil-based paints and produce images that imbue common subjects with a kind of fantastical quality. On the other hand, I noted that each artist is

² Ernest Hebert, *Live Free or Die* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1990), 160–161.

driven by a distinct representational purpose. While Jill's work seems to emerge from an interest in giving visual expression to abstract emotions and concepts, Mary's work seems to emerge from a commitment to representing the world around her as her inner life prompts her to perceive it. The idea that the paintings of both artists bridge in contrasting ways the inner and outer dimensions of lived experience piqued my interest in interpreting together their artistic engagement with Monadnock.

In a manner similar to Jill, Mary has maintained a lifelong interest in art that she attributes principally to the guidance of her mother. After I asked her how she came to discover her interest in painting, she responded, "Oh, the usual stereotype. I was one year old. My mother put a crayon in my hand, and I started drawing." From then on, she recalls, "It was very easy for my mother to find ... Christmas presents for me and my sister. She gave us a pad of paper and a new box of crayons. Year in and year out, that's all we really wanted." With the exception of one drawing that she remembers completing of her grandmother with a pigtail, Mary devoted all of her artistic attention as a child to the subject of horses—a subject to which she continues to devote considerable attention as a professional artist. "I don't know what it is," she remarked, "but ... a large percentage of women artists are interested in horses."

As a high school student in Brockton, MA—the town in which she grew up—Mary was given an unusual opportunity to build upon the artistic interests that she had developed as a child. "I went to a high school that had a better art program probably than most colleges," she recalls. As students, Mary and her art classmates "were in the studio [for] a minimum of four hours a day and then would often come back after [school]." As a result of the unusual strength of Brockton High School's art program and the commitment of the administrator who oversaw it, Mary and her classmates developed a passion for producing art that motivated them to make responsible

decisions and thus to resist the temptation to engage in activities that might have caused them harm. “It was the height of drugs,” she recalls, “and I’m sure the head of the department saved ... hundreds ... of lives, because if any kid had a serious interest, he plugged them in and he’d do anything for them.” “I never did drugs,” she continued, “because I knew I wanted to paint and I didn’t want my life all screwed up.”

Ironically, Mary attributes the continuity of her commitment to painting after high school to her decision to pursue academic interests other than art in college. Alongside the interest in painting that she pursued in high school, Mary had nurtured an interest in creative writing. Following her graduation from high school, she remembers, “I was all signed up to go to art school, and [at] the last second, I decided to switch to writing” and thus to enroll in McGill University. Instead of guiding her into a career in writing, however, this decision had the unexpected consequence of ensuring the possibility of her pursuing a career in painting. Unbeknownst to her at the time, a defining feature of the art program in which she initially intended to enroll was a strong opposition to the representational style in which she hoped to work. She explains, “if you had any interest in realism of any kind, [the art school] went quack, squish, and then smear. If you didn’t utterly flunk out, you were ridiculed. ... It would take [you] thirty or forty years to have the self-possession to ever pick up another paintbrush.” In contrast to this strong bias toward abstract art, McGill’s art program allowed Mary to paint in the representational style that she favored while pursuing her interest in writing.

After graduating from McGill, Mary taught art periodically at schools in the Monadnock region; however, the increasing demands of her work at home came to take temporary precedence over her interest in art. These demands included raising her three sons and working on Earth Haven Farm—a cattle, sheep, and horse farm in Marlborough where Mary and her

husband George have lived and worked for the last 35 years. After “I painted my way through college,” she recalls, “[I] got married. I wasn’t doing a lot of painting then,” she continues, “because it was the farm” that consumed most of her time. She continued to paint periodically, she remembers, until her children were born. “When I had kids,” she explains, “I couldn’t paint,” because the work of raising her children in addition to work of tending to the farm left her no time for painting. “But as soon as [my children] got big,” she stated, “I went back to painting, and that’s what I do.”

As Mary’s aforementioned decision to pursue interests other than art in college allowed her to maintain her commitment to painting, so her decision to cease working as a professional painter when her children were born became a source of artistic inspiration to her later in life. With reference to the time that Mary devoted to caring for her children and working on the farm, Mary stated, “it was wonderful. ... [I]t gave me something to paint about later,” when her children reached young adulthood. When I asked her to explain more thoroughly this connection between her time away from painting and her subsequent sense of artistic inspiration, she responded, “My kids and the farm and all that ... It [all] gave me a lot more depth in knowing myself and in [knowing] what I want to paint.” She went on to explain that her commitment to the farm and to the work of mothering her sons afforded her a “sense of home” that “is really important to me. I never go anywhere,” she continued. “I put down deep roots ... and so I feel very, very at home here. I don’t know what I’d do leaving [here].”

As a principal source of creative inspiration, this deep sense of belonging that Mary began to acquire during her hiatus from painting has come to inform both the content and the style of her work. Mary paints subjects that are part of the world in which she has come to feel at home. Shortly after I met her on the front steps of her house on Earth Haven Farm, she offered

me a tour of her studio, during which I noted a general parallelism between the subjects of her paintings and the features of the world through which I had driven on my way from Keene to Marlborough. On easels throughout the studio were numerous paintings of local landscapes, village centers, barns, farm animals, and hayfields. As I would come to learn during my subsequent conversation with Mary, she completes a majority of these paintings plein air, and she seeks to produce paintings that convey her strong sense of familiarity with the subjects that she paints. “To me,” she explained, “it really helps to have a subject that I know well.” A subject, she went on to explain, “[is] like a person. You’re not on intimate terms immediately.” Thus, for Mary, on the one hand, painting well requires the artist to have developed already with her subject a sense of intimacy that inspires joy. This precedent, joyful sense of intimacy allows the artist to achieve in her painting the goal that Mary pursues. “I guess if I had an intent in my paintings,” she reflected, “it would be to make people smile, to bring joy.”

On the other hand, Mary paints in order to gain the joyful sense of connection that allows her to feel at home in the world that she inhabits. Mary admitted the possibility of gaining this sense of connection by means of activities other than painting. Indeed, the aforementioned artistic inspiration that she gained during her hiatus from painting attests to this possibility. When I asked her how she came to know her subjects in the intimate way that painting them requires, she responded that such intimacy comes from “more than just observing. It’s more living in. I guess you could say engaging.” Nonetheless, she stated ultimately that the work of coming to know things as artistic subjects requires multiple attempts at painting them. “When I go to a new location,” she explained, “it takes a while to get to know that location.” Once she gains familiarity with a location, however, it begins to become part of the world in which she feels at home. “The more I’m getting to know” a subject, she stated, the more the subject seems

to say to her, “you’re one of mine. You’re here. You keep coming here.” Thus, in a reciprocal manner, the work of painting the world around her fosters in Mary the sense of home that painting well seems to require. Conversely, the sense of being at home in a place—a sense that prompts artistic inspiration—emerges, in part, from earlier efforts to paint the features of that place.

In accordance with her emphasis on the importance of painting subjects repeatedly, Mary has engaged artistically with Monadnock more than any of the other artists whom I recruited. After touring her studio and observing a number of portraits of Monadnock among the tremendous number of paintings that the studio houses, I asked her how many times she had painted the mountain. “At least a hundred,” she responded without pause. As I would come to discover during the second and third portions of the interview and various subsequent conversations that I conducted with her, Mary possesses a kind of holistic and nuanced appreciation of Monadnock that revealed to me a number of interesting dimensions of the lived experience of engaging artistically with the mountain and helped me to make sense of the experiences of my other participants.

Jim Kates

Early in my process of research when I was compiling works of literature that include references to Monadnock, I asked a colleague of mine who teaches and writes poetry if he had discovered any recent Monadnock poems. He responded promptly by sending me two poems by

a friend of his named Jim Kates: “Monadnoc: Reprise” and “Places of Permanent Shade.”³ When I came to recognize that my research interests would require me to interview people about their experience of artistic engagement with the mountain, I sent Jim an e-mail to request his participation in my research study. Jim agreed with enthusiasm, though he did not shy away from expressing his reservations about my research agenda. After conducting a pilot interview with Jim at his house in Fitzwilliam, I questioned whether these reservations might preclude Jim from participation in my study. Initially, Jim seemed convinced that my research question begged a simple response and he seemed unwilling to accept the philosophical premises of phenomenology. Ultimately, my interest in Jim’s manifold engagement with Monadnock and my appreciation of his remarkable intellectual flexibility prompted me to recruit him in spite of my concerns. During the subsequent interview and informal conversations that I conducted with Jim, I would come to value immensely Jim’s willingness openly to express his reservations about the questions that I posed to him and his suspicion of my research approach; for, the processes of justifying my interview prompts and convincing Jim of the viability of my research interests helped me to sharpen both the focus and the parameters of my dissertation topic.

In common with Jill Fischman and Mary Iselin, Jim attributes his interest in poetry principally to the guidance of his mother. “When I was very young,” Jim recalled, “I had an idea, and I ran to my mother and told her my idea ... it was that maybe when we’re awake, ... really we’re asleep and dreaming, and when we go to sleep ... is really when we wake up.” Jim’s

³ J. Kates, “Monadnoc: Reprise” (*Smokey Quartz: An Online Journal of Literature & Art*, Fall 2023, accessed December 12, 2023, <https://smokyquartz.org/monadnoc-reprise-2/>); J. Kates, *Places of Permanent Shade* (Lexington: Access Publishing, 2022), 75.

mother responded to his existential idea in a way that inspired his interest in poetry. “She took me over to the bookshelf and took out *The Oxford Book of English Verse*,” he recalls. “She put it in my hand and said ‘this is what a real book feels like.’ ... And then she opened it up and read to me [a] passage from Wordsworth’s ‘Ode on Intimations of Immortality.’” Thus, Jim’s mother revealed to him that “Wordsworth had explored and had written in very eloquent terms exactly what I had been thinking,” and “therefore, I didn’t need to think it ... but I could respond to it.” Based upon this early childhood experience, Jim came to develop an appreciation of poetry that continues to motivate him to write and translate poems. He felt “imbued with the idea of writing as conversation” that engages the writer “in this tremendous ... correspondence across time and space with everybody else.” In this correspondence, the writer “[receives] something from somewhere else, whether it’s been written or experienced, and [gives] it back out again.”

Like Jill Fischman and Mary Iselin, Jim hails from outside of the Monadnock region and he had developed already the literary and political interests that he would come to pursue in association with Monadnock when he first encountered the mountain. Jim grew up in Elmsford and White Plains—two towns in Westchester County, New York. Following his graduation from White Plains High School in 1963, Jim attended Wesleyan University where he pursued his burgeoning interests in poetry and political activism. Among the notable literary figures with whom Jim studied at Wesleyan are poet Richard Wilbur and translator Norman R. Shapiro. During the summer that followed his freshman year at Wesleyan, Jim traveled to Holly Springs and Batesville to serve as a Freedom Summer volunteer for the Mississippi Summer Project—a campaign that the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) established to register as many African American voters as possible in the state of Mississippi. During the autumn that followed, he acted on the encouragement that he received from Jim Forman, the executive secretary of the

Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Jimmie Travis, the field secretary of the SNCC, and he traveled to France to organize a Friends of SNCC/COFO in Paris. In 1965, he returned to the United States to volunteer for the SNCC office in Washington, D.C., before moving back to Mississippi to volunteer in the city of Natchez.

Although a teaching job at Conant High School in Jaffrey is what prompted Jim to move to the Monadnock region initially in the early 1980s, he would come to devote most of his time in the region to the work of writing, translating, and publishing literature. Since moving first to Jaffrey and then to Fitzwilliam, Jim has published more than 30 books of poetry, including three chapbooks of his own poems, one book that includes original and translated poems, and more than 20 books of translated poetry. Moreover, since 1997 when he became a co-director of Zephyr Press—a non-profit independent press that specializes in the publication of literature in translation—Jim has edited numerous books of translated poetry and prose. His work has received multiple awards including a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship in poetry in 1984, an Individual Artist Fellowship from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts in 1995, and a National Endowment for the Arts Translation Project Fellowship in 2006. More recently, under his direction, Zephyr Press won the 2019 Small Press Publisher Award from the Association of Writers and Writing Programs.

The sense of purpose and the compositional process that have prompted Jim's ample literary corpus indicate the persistent influence of his aforementioned childhood encounter with Wordsworth. In accordance with the understanding of poetry as "correspondence across time and space" that Jim began to develop after listening to his mother read a portion of "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," Jim appeals to his own experience as a vehicle for conveying a sense of meaning that has integrity apart from the particular features of that experience—a

meaning that becomes accessible to people across time and space by transcending the geographic and temporal parameters of its experiential medium. “I am not interested in ... poems that are really about how sensitive I am,” he explained. “If I find myself writing that, I throw it out immediately.” He continued, “I’m not interested ultimately in my own experience. I’m interested in *their* experience”—that is, the experience of his readers. “It’s communication,” he reminded me. As Jim distinguishes the experiential vehicle from the meaning of his poems, so he distinguishes the writing process from the poems that it yields. He noted that the experience of writing a poem has no bearing on the quality of the poem written. “The elation of writing a bad poem is precisely the same as the elation of writing a good poem,” he observed. “You’re sitting there, you’re writing, you’re composing something, you say, ‘oh yes, this is fantastic! This is wonderful!’ I walk around in a warm glow. And it has nothing to do with the quality of what I’ve written.” Therefore, Jim allows for the passage of time to determine the quality of his poems. “An important element for me,” he stated, “is time, is letting go, is letting things sit, is seeing when I come back to my work at another point, does it still impress me as a reader as much as I felt it or experienced it as a writer?” Ultimately, this process allows Jim to determine whether his poems transcend or remain confined within the parameters of his own experience and thus to recognize “what’s particular to me and what belongs in the world.”

Jim’s commitment to a number of ideas that seemed contradictory to the principles of phenomenology initially prompted me to question his eligibility for participation in my research study. During the pilot interview that I conducted with him, Jim insisted that each of the various activities that he pursued in association with the mountain had no influence on any of the others. In accordance with this sharp distinction, he expressed emphatic opposition to identifying his political engagement with Monadnock as a form of art. Finally, Jim argued repeatedly that the

geography and cultural history of Monadnock were irrelevant to his decision to write about the mountain and to the meaning that his Monadnock poems convey, and he attributed to a “geographical accident” the fact that the mountain happened to host an interesting experience that could otherwise have occurred anywhere.

During subsequent conversations with Jim, I came to recognize that Jim’s opposition to the idea that places play a role in determining poetic meaning accords with his broader understanding of the purpose of poetry, and this recognition helped me to probe Jim’s experience more deeply and to discover the dynamics of Jim’s experience of artistic engagement with Monadnock. As I discussed earlier, Jim’s notion of poetry as “communication across time and space” prompts him to distinguish the particular experiences that inspire his poetry and the meaning that his poems convey. As the setting of two of his poems, Monadnock belongs in the particular category of Jim’s experience, and he therefore resists the idea that the meaning of his poems is somehow contingent upon anything that is particular to the mountain or to his experience on it. In order for his poems to communicate across time and space—that is, in order from his poems to accomplish what poems are meant to accomplish—they need to convey a meaning that is independent of any particular temporal or geographical feature of Jim’s experience. This discovery of the remarkable consistency of Jim’s understanding of poetry and his appreciation of Monadnock prompted me to ask him less about his poems and more about the experiences of Monadnock that he describes in them.

Experiential Phases

In conjunction with this biographical information, my phenomenological theme analysis revealed in the lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock five experiential phases that my participants underwent in the following sequence: first encounter,

abstract appreciation, existential understanding, sustained attention, and continuity. In what follows, I will offer detailed explanation of each of these experiential phases. In the interest of demonstrating the consonance of each of these phases with the experiential process of all of my participants, I will appeal to elements of all of my participants' lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock to elucidate each of the experiential phases that my research disclosed.

First Encounter

All of my participants attributed their interest in artistic invention in association with Monadnock to their first encounters with the mountain. I use the term "first encounter" here to describe two primary moments in my participants' artistic engagement with the mountain: (1) a favorable experience of focused appreciation of the view of Monadnock on the horizon that may or may not be a first experience of viewing the mountain and (2) the initial experiences of recreational engagement that this view inspired. While my participants shared similar first experiences of deliberate appreciation of the view of Monadnock, these experiences inspired various recreational activities: some of my participants developed a frequent habit of viewing the mountain, while others began a more or less regular practice of hiking on the mountain.

According to all of my participants, an unexpected moment of captivation with the view of Monadnock on the horizon initiates interest in engaging the mountain artistically. This momentary experience invests in my participants aesthetic impressions of the mountain that they describe using similar terms such as "magnificent," "majestic," and "beautiful." Ernest underwent this experience long after he first viewed Monadnock. In spite of the aforementioned passive appreciation of the mountain that he maintained during his childhood and young adulthood, he experienced while viewing Monadnock in the late 1980s a moment of "delightful

shock” in which he developed “a deeply emotional appreciation for our little mountain.” He explained that this experience inspired him to write the description of Frederick Elman’s impression of Monadnock in *Live Free or Die* that I quoted above. Thus, Elman’s impression of Monadnock may be interpreted as a description of Ernest’s personal experience of the mountain. In this experience, Ernest comes to appreciate Monadnock as “magnificent,” as “immense,” and as “God.” Mary gained a similar impression of the mountain as a teenager when she first viewed it through the window of her parents’ car. “I looked out the window in the car,” she recalls. “I saw it, it’s magnificent, that’s all there is to it.” In a similar manner, Jill attributes her artistic engagement with Monadnock to the impression of the mountain that she gained while viewing it from the deck of her house in Marlborough. She noted that her impression of “the strength, the majesty, the majestic mountain” initiated a period of appreciating the mountain that would come to inspire artistic invention. Finally, Jim identified moments in which he came suddenly to appreciate the “incredible beauty” of Monadnock as the primary source of inspiration for his artistic invention in association with the mountain. These moments prompted him to pursue a variety of interests in association with Monadnock and ultimately to compose poems that address the mountain. As the experiences of my participants demonstrate, artistic engagement with Monadnock begins with a momentary and captivating experience of viewing Monadnock on the horizon.

This view of Monadnock, in turn, inspires recreational activity in association with the mountain. In spite of the common aesthetic sensibility that it presumes, this activity varies in the proximity to Monadnock and the type of exertion that it requires. Initial experiences of captivation with the view of Monadnock can inspire a regular practice of studying the form of the mountain from a distance. Jill and Ernest took up such a practice following their moments of

captivation with the view of Monadnock. After developing an appreciation of the “strength” and “majesty” of Monadnock, Jill “loved looking at the mountain” from her deck and through the windows of her house in Marlborough. “It’s so exquisite,” she remarked. “When I lived where Monadnock was our backdrop, the light that you would see, the different colors, the tones of the mountain that would depict change and wonder and lust and drama, were just endless. And the storms and the shades ... it's a beautiful image.” Unlike Jill who has never ascended to the summit of Monadnock, Ernest climbed the mountain twice; however, his fear of heights and the vertigo that he experiences in high places account for his preference to remain at a distance from Monadnock. “I appreciate the mountain in the abstract,” he explained. Initial experiences of appreciating the view of Monadnock can also inspire recreational activity that is more proximate to the mountain and more physically demanding. After coming to appreciate the view of Monadnock, Mary and Jim began a regular practice of hiking on the mountain. Mary took up a regular practice of hiking to the summit of Monadnock with family and friends after her experience of viewing the mountain through the window of her family’s car. Over the course of these hikes, she developed a sense of connection to the mountain. “I think the mountain’s presence grows on you ... You go up there as a teenager or a kid to climb it ... and that's fun and it's beautiful, but the 10th time you climb it, it starts revealing itself to you in layers.” Finally, Jim developed a rigorous habit of hiking daily on the mountain after appreciating its form on the horizon. “My summer routine,” he recalls “used to be to get up in the morning, bicycle down to the state park, climb up either the White Dot or the White Cross, cross over to the other without going to the summit, come on down, bike over to Thorndike Pond, jump in for a quick swim, go back and start my day’s work.” Thus, initial experiences of captivation with the view of Monadnock prompts various forms of recreational activity in association with the mountain.

According to the experience of my participants, artistic engagement with Monadnock presumes a first encounter with the mountain. This encounter comprises a moment of captivation with the view of the mountain on the horizon and subsequent engagement in recreational activity in association with the mountain. While the impression that my participants gained from viewing the mountain was similar, the recreational activity that this common impression inspired differed in the proximity to the mountain and type of engagement that it required. While some of my participants engaged in deliberate contemplation of the view of the mountain, others commenced a more or less frequent habit of hiking on the mountain.

Abstract Appreciation

Following their first encounters with Monadnock, my participants developed an abstract appreciation of the mountain. I use “abstract appreciation” here to describe mental engagement with Monadnock that occurs apart from any contemporaneous sensory experience of viewing the mountain. This mental engagement comprises focused and peripheral thoughts, impressions, emotions, and ideas vis-à-vis Monadnock that arise without intention in the midst of activity in which the mountain has no necessary purpose. Such mental engagement with the mountain presumes both sensory and non-sensory stimuli. Thus, while abstract appreciation of the mountain often follows a sensory experience of viewing the mountain on the horizon, it can also occur apart from the stimulus of a sensory experience of the mountain.

On the one hand, abstract appreciation of Monadnock often follows a sensory experience of catching sight of the mountain while engaging in other activities. Jim and Ernest both experience a lingering impression of Monadnock after incidental experiences of observing the mountain in the distance. Jim undergoes such experiences often while driving in the Monadnock region. “I’m very aware of it,” he stated with reference to the mountain. “I’m aware of it when

I'm driving around, in particular." He went on to explain, "I don't think that there's any time when I ... drive a road anywhere around where the summit ... come[s] into view that I am not aware of it, that it is not part of my landscape, part of the aesthetic." In conjunction with the memory of his first encounters with Monadnock and his ongoing recreational engagement with the mountain, these incidental observations of Monadnock have established the mountain as a feature of Jim's mental activity. Jim conveyed by implication this abstract appreciation of Monadnock during a conversation in which he likened his daughter's engagement with Gap Mountain to his own engagement with Monadnock. "My daughter is right now treating Gap Mountain the same way I treated Monadnock," he explained. "She's going out every morning and ... hiking Gap and coming back." Based upon this point of similarity, he concluded, "Gap is going to be in her consciousness" and thus revealed by implication the presence of Monadnock in his. In a similar manner, after Ernest underwent the "delightful shock" that commenced his first encounter with Monadnock, the view of the mountain came to summon a subsequent extrasensory awareness of the mountain. In a manner similar to Jim, Ernest came to acknowledge Monadnock as a feature of his mental activity—to appreciate "the mountain in the abstract." Jim and Ernest's experiences attest that the sensory experience of observing Monadnock can prompt an abstract appreciation that persists after the mountain is no longer visible.

On the other hand, abstract appreciation of Monadnock can also occur apart from immediate sensory moments of viewing the mountain. Jill and Mary both described personal experiences of emotional appreciation of Monadnock. While these experiences often follow a moment of viewing Monadnock, they can also occur at a distance from the mountain. After her first encounter with Monadnock, Jill came to appreciate the mountain in association with the ample and diverse set of natural and human cultural features that constitute her experience of

living in southwestern New Hampshire. The whole of this set of features came to afford her the connected senses of freedom and creative inspiration that she continues to experience in the Monadnock region. After first encountering Monadnock, Jill recalls, “I felt free. I felt very free for the first time.” Moreover, she discovered that living in the Monadnock region “inspires me.” Nonetheless, she confessed that “It’s more than just Monadnock.... It’s me ... in the area. I could never give credit to one thing, but it’s an area that is filled with so many talented, gifted people, so I feel that energy, I feel it and it reaches me.” In a similar manner, after Mary first encountered Monadnock, she came to appreciate the mountain as a “spiritual being,” an “overarching presence” that combines with other experiential phenomena to emit an “energy,” a “feeling” of being in the Monadnock region that inspires creativity. As Jill and Mary experience this energy apart from an immediate sensory perception of each and all of the experiential components that the energy presumes, so the inspiration that they gain from Monadnock, in particular, presume no necessary experience of viewing the mountain. Rather, they emerge from an abstract awareness of the mountain’s close geographical proximity.

The captivation and recreational engagement that constitute first encounters with Monadnock prompt an abstract appreciation of the mountain. This appreciation consists of thoughts, impressions, emotions, and ideas vis-à-vis the mountain that occur apart from any contemporaneous sensory experience of viewing the mountain. While abstract appreciation often presumes experiences of catching sight of Monadnock on the horizon, such appreciation can also follow from an awareness of the close proximity of the mountain that occurs apart from any immediately precedent experience of viewing the mountain.

Existential Understanding

The abstraction of Monadnock appreciation from contemporaneous sensory experience of the mountain allows for the development of existential understanding in association with the mountain. I use “existential understanding” here to describe a rudimentary interpretive process in which Monadnock gains meaning by association with concepts that describe conditions of being in the world. Irrespective of whether abstract appreciation of the mountain presumes a sensory or non-sensory experience, the thoughts, impressions, emotions, and ideas that such appreciation comprises become significant by virtue of their reciprocal interaction with these existential concepts. In this interpretive process, these concepts help to furnish an understanding of Monadnock appreciation, and Monadnock appreciation, in turn, helps to sharpen understanding of the concepts with which it gains association.

In the experience of all of my participants, abstract appreciation of Monadnock gains association with the particular existential concepts of permanence and impermanence. All of my participants appeal to these concepts to explain the meaning that they discern in their experience of the mountain. They attribute the sensory and the abstract attention that Monadnock summons to both the unchanging form and the ever changing appearance of the mountain. Although permanence and impermanence describe opposing existential conditions, an understanding of each concept in association with Monadnock inspires an understanding of the other. Thus, appreciation of the unchanging form of the mountain prompts an awareness of the mountain’s changing appearance, and observation of changes in the appearance of the mountain prompts appreciation of the mountain’s unchanging form. This reciprocal process of understanding follows from an experiential tendency to conflate appreciation of Monadnock with the transient circumstances in which the mountain summons either visual perception or abstract appreciation.

While my participants experience a common understanding of permanence in association with Monadnock, this understanding presumes and gives rise to various observations of impermanence in association with the mountain.

All of my participants expressed a common understanding of permanence in association with Monadnock. While some participants articulated this understanding directly, others conveyed it by implication. In reflecting upon the attention that Monadnock summons, Jim and Mary offered explicit discussion of permanence in association with the mountain. Jim observed that “when you live by a mountain, you’re aware of permanence. Things don’t change. So there’s that ... sense of permanence. It’s always going to be there looking exactly like that.” In a similar manner, Mary noted that Monadnock has “its own permanence, its own self, its own identity.” In contrast to Jim and Mary’s explicit attribution of permanence to Monadnock, Ernest and Jill implied the permanence of Monadnock by identifying the mountain with qualities that presume its immunity to change. For example, in the aforementioned passage of *Live Free or Die* that describes a personal experience of viewing Monadnock, Ernest identifies the mountain as God and thus implies its immunity to the change that governs the world around it. In a similar manner, Jill described the mountain as “stable” and thus distinguished it from the transient conditions that determine its appearance in a given moment. In the experience of all of my participants, therefore, Monadnock summons sensory and abstract attention by gaining association with the existential condition of permanence.

Among the temporary conditions that inspire by contrast this understanding of the permanence of Monadnock are nephological formations. These changing arrangements of clouds above and around the mountain inform appreciation of Monadnock and thus help to prompt an association of the mountain with the concept of impermanence. While one of my participants

attended to the clouds in his view of Monadnock for the practical purpose of foreseeing weather conditions, other participants enjoyed a more disinterested appreciation of the clouds in their view of the mountain. On the one hand, Jim often views Monadnock to discern weather conditions. “I [look] at [the mountain] ... to gauge ... whether there are clouds or fronts off it,” he explains. With reference to cloud formations among the other features that condition temporarily his appreciation of the mountain, Jim observed “your view is constantly changing. You’re never seeing the same view of the same mountain.” On the other hand, Mary and Jill appreciate changing nephological formations over Monadnock for the sole purpose of enjoying their beauty. Mary identifies the movement of clouds among the conditions that prompt her awareness of the impermanence of the mountain. “Oh my gosh, the clouds are coming through,” she observes hypothetically. Clouds over Monadnock, she notes, cast the mountain in “a whole other set of colors and a whole other mood.” Jill expressed a similar interest in clouds over Monadnock. “I love clouds and the formations by the mountain are just spectacular,” she stated. “I just love the life in clouds, the life and the movement and the colors,” all of which “depict change,” she observed. Thus, cloud formations condition momentarily the impression that Monadnock summons and thus inspire association of the mountain with the concept of impermanence.

Nephological formations among other transient circumstances help to determine related changes in the light and color that condition momentarily the appearance of Monadnock and thus inspire association of the mountain with the existential condition of impermanence. These changes summon a particularly acute awareness in association with seasonal transitions and human subjective experience. While Mary and Jim appreciate the changing appearance of Monadnock in general, they focused their discussion upon the particular changes that follow

from seasonal transitions. Mary described her interest in “the interaction of the light in the area and the color of the mountain” during autumn. With reference to the appearance of Monadnock in the evening during autumn foliage season, Mary observes, “it starts revealing these layers of color. ... It starts telling you more and more beautiful things.” Jim described his habit of watching “the play of light” on Monadnock during the winter. The changing appearance of the mountain, he notes, “is much more interesting when there is snow on it.” “I find that I’ve been sitting here for 20 minutes, just looking at ... the mountain, the play of light,” he explained. “It’s like, ‘Oh, look at the colors against the sky,’” he said in imitation of his own experience. While Jill also appreciates the changing displays of light and color on Monadnock that follow from seasonal transitions, she focused her discussion upon the inner experience that she has come to associate with such changes on the mountain. “When I lived where Monadnock was our backdrop,” she recalls, “the light that you would see, the different colors, the tones of the mountain that would depict change and wonder and lust and drama, were just endless.” According to Jill’s experience, changes of light and color on Monadnock summon attention by evoking pleasurable, momentary experiences. Thus, the changing displays of light and color on the mountain prompt appreciation of the existential condition of impermanence in association with Monadnock.

To the extent that movement, in general, conditions appreciation of Monadnock, it also inspires awareness of impermanence in association with the mountain. In addition to defining the nephological formations over Monadnock and the play of light and color that such formations help to determine, movement summons appreciation of the impermanence of Monadnock as the condition of either appreciating subjects or the objects in the foreground of their appreciation of the mountain. Jim discussed the impression of Monadnock that he gains from the experience of

circumnavigating the mountain. He observed that “one amazing thing about [Monadnock] is that you can go all around it and your view is constantly changing. You're never seeing the same view of the same mountain.” He noted further that “wherever you look at it from, it's going to look different and unique and ... frame its landscape in its own way, or define its landscape in its own way.” Thus, Jim gains from his experience of moving around Monadnock an appreciation of the impermanence of each of the views of the mountain that he observes. Ernest, on the other hand, appreciates Monadnock in association with the movement of objects in the foreground of his view of the mountain. In the process of recalling his first encounter with Monadnock, he remembers the appearance of the mountain beyond the “blowing newspapers and other trash.” Thus, he comes to appreciate the permanence of Monadnock against a foreground that is subject to movement and change. The experience of Jim and Ernest indicate the possibility for movement to inspire appreciation of impermanence in association with Monadnock.

The abstract appreciation that follows a first encounter with Monadnock prompts a process of existential understanding in which the mountain gains association with rudimentary concepts that describe conditions of being in the world. In this process of understanding, Monadnock gains association with the particular existential concepts of permanence and impermanence, each of which prompts an appreciation of the other. Thus, a common appreciation of the permanence of Monadnock gains significance in contrast to various temporary conditions that include nephological formations, light and color, and movement. These temporary conditions, in turn, prompt appreciation of impermanence in association with the mountain.

Sustained Attention

Appreciation of impermanence in association with Monadnock inspires the production of art. This art is diverse in form, media, and subject material. It comprises a wide variety of visual, literary, and musical compositions some of which address the mountain as a primary subject and others of which presume engagement with the mountain in the process of addressing a subject other than the mountain itself. In spite of its diversity, all of this art addresses fleeting sensory or abstract appreciations of Monadnock. As a consequence, the process of creating this art requires uninterrupted concentration upon the appreciation of Monadnock that the art seeks to express. Only by means of such sustained attention can an artist hope fully to acknowledge and express a momentary appreciation of the mountain before the circumstances that produced this appreciation change and a new appreciation of the mountain begins to take its place. In the experience of my participants, fleeting sensory and non-sensory appreciations of Monadnock motivated artistic production and thus became subject to sustained attention. The impermanence of the environmental conditions that informed sensory appreciations and the impressions that informed non-sensory appreciations of Monadnock required the sustained attention that my participants devoted to the mountain during the process of artistic production.

Initially, impermanent sensory and non-sensory appreciations of Monadnock seem to *summon* sustained attention. That is to say, such appreciations seem to become subjects of sustained attention apart from any deliberate effort of artists. Indeed, all of my participants attributed their decision to create art in association with Monadnock to a kind of involuntary captivation with some dimension of their experience of the mountain. For example, Mary attributed her sustained attention to Monadnock to the impermanence of the views of the mountain that are the subjects of her paintings. In response to my question about distractions that

she faces while painting a particular appreciation of Monadnock, she stated that the work of painting the mountain is “too engaging.... It’s too immediate a process” to allow for distractions. Thus, she conveyed by implication the idea that appreciations of Monadnock become subject to her sustained attention independent of any conscious effort. In a similar manner, Jill attributed the sustained attention that she devoted to Monadnock while painting a series of self-portraits and an abstract mountain landscape principally to her sense of being addressed by the mountain. “The mountain just spoke to me internally, spiritually,” she stated after I asked her why she focused her attention on Monadnock during her process of artistic invention. In a manner similar to Mary, therefore, Jill identified the mountain as the active agent in her experience of attending to it. Ernest attributed to all of the subjects that he addresses in writing the power to summon sustained attention that Mary and Jill ascribe to Monadnock. Since he writes about Monadnock, Ernest’s description of his experience of writing applies as much to writing about the mountain as it does to writing about any other subject. He experiences writing as “a wonderful flow of anticipation and alertness that I will be entertained by my muse.” “Really,” he continued, “it’s as if the stuff I dream up with words doesn’t come from me, but from an outside source far more advanced and profound—better!—than little me.” Thus, Ernest identified himself as a kind of passive agent in the process of attending to Monadnock. In a manner similar to Ernest, Jim drew no distinction between the attention that he devotes to Monadnock and the attention that he devotes to other subjects that he addresses in his poetry. They all seem to summon his sustained attention apart from any deliberate effort. “One of the problems with my life as I get older,” he observed, “is I can’t get bored. I find that I’ve been sitting here for 20 minutes just looking at that rock and watching the play of light on it, or the mountain, the play of light.” In accordance with the experience of my other participants, Jim discovers himself attending to impermanent

appreciations of Monadnock for extended periods of time. His sustained attention to the mountain, therefore, occurs apart from any deliberate effort that he might take to focus his attention on the mountain.

As the process of artistic invention progresses, however, the locus of the activity that sustains attention to Monadnock shifts gradually from the mountain itself to the artist who attends to it. That is to say, sustained attention to the mountain occurs progressively less as a response to the impetus of Monadnock and progressively more as a deliberate effort that is undertaken by the artist. As the artist devotes deliberate attention to the mountain in the effort to give artistic expression to an impermanent sensory or abstract appreciation, the mountain begins to recede in the consciousness of the artist and extraneous interests begin to compete with the mountain for the attention of the artist. As a consequence, the work of sustaining the attention to Monadnock that the mountain itself initially summons requires a conscious effort to overcome the distraction of extraneous sensory and abstract stimuli and thus to sustain attention to a particular appreciation of the mountain.

The work of maintaining sustained attention to fleeting sensory appreciations of Monadnock, on the one hand, demands an ability to resist the distraction of self-consciousness. All of my participants who create art that expresses sensory appreciation of Monadnock experience during periods of sustained attention to the mountain the draw of a kind of reflexive appreciation—an awareness of themselves attending to the mountain. In addition to distracting their concentration from the content of their perception, this consciousness of self threatens to transform the appreciation that is the subject of their attention by introducing into it a new, abstract experiential dimension. In the experience of Mary and Jill, sustained attention to sensory appreciation of Monadnock requires resistance to an awareness of self that comes from critical

evaluation of themselves as artists. Mary observed that artistic expression of fleeting appreciations of Monadnock is contingent upon overcoming “monkey mind”—a term that she used to describe the self-criticism that occasionally distracts her attention from Monadnock. “Monkey mind,” she explained, consists of thoughts that are “never a help to you or anyone else,” such as “well, I wonder why [my artwork] didn't get into that show. I should have gotten into that show.” Her captivation with fleeting views of Monadnock helps her to overcome such mental activity and to return her focus to the content of her perception. “Monkey mind,” she observes, “goes through you” because the work of painting Monadnock is “too engaging It's too immediate a process.” Jill described a similar tendency to criticize herself in the process of attending to fleeting views of Monadnock. In the process of completing a series of self-portraits while appreciating the ever changing view of the mountain, Jill regularly experienced the temptation to distance herself critically from her sustained appreciation of Monadnock and her process of artistic production so that she might critique the work that she had completed. Recognizing the potential for such self-criticism both to undermine her appreciation of Monadnock and to derail her creative inspiration, she resisted this temptation and thus sustained her attention on her perception of the mountain by instructing herself repeatedly “don't criticize yourself; don't criticize yourself.” According to the experience of Mary and Jill, sustained attention to temporary sensory appreciations of Monadnock in the process of creating art requires resistance against the distraction of self-criticism and the broader awareness of self that self-criticism presumes.

Sustained attention to abstract appreciations of Monadnock, on the other hand, requires a consistent effort to summon the temporary impressions that the mountain seems to conjure. Naturally, this effort requires limiting attention to extraneous sensory and abstract stimuli and

thus confining attention to the experiential components of the impression of interest. Jim and Ernest both undertook this effort in the process of attending to abstract appreciations of Monadnock that came to inspire literary invention. Jim recalls an experience of viewing the mountain in which he came simultaneously to appreciate its topography from multiple vantages. “I’m at the foot [of the mountain] ... at the intersection of 124 and Jaffrey Road,” he recalled. “I’m looking up and I’m thinking, I’m being aware of where the trails are and what the foliage is.... At the same time, I’m remembering and seeing where the trails can go off and where I’ve been. I have the muscle memory of how to climb that.” Thus, he concluded that his experience of viewing the mountain comprises an experience of being “in two places at once”: at the foot of the mountain and on the mountain. Jim’s sustained attention to such an experience yielded “Monadnoc: Reprise”—a poem that recounts an experience of observing the mountain after snowfall and appreciating at once the appearance of the snow-covered mountain and the memory of the topography that the snow has hidden from view. Ernest recalls his aforementioned first encounter with Monadnock while viewing the mountain from a landfill in Keene. Sustained attention to this “deeply emotional appreciation” of the mountain yielded the passage of *Live Free or Die* in which the protagonist Frederick Elman appreciates the mountain as a divine presence and thus comes to discover the sense of awe that his late father experienced while viewing the mountain. According to the experiences of Jim and Ernest, sustained attention to abstract appreciations of Monadnock requires a deliberate effort to summon vivid memory of temporary impressions that past sensory experiences of the mountain seemed to conjure.

Before and during the process of artistic invention, sustained attention to Monadnock has the effect of deepening the existential understanding that it presumes. The sensory and abstract appreciations that summon sustained attention are generally fleeting views or impressions of the

mountain as opposed to appreciations of the mountain as it appears most often. That is to say, the appreciations that inspire association of Monadnock with the concept of impermanence are those that summon sustained attention. As a deliberate undertaking, such attention, in turn, comes to serve the purpose of giving permanent artistic expression to the impermanent appreciation that initially summoned attention apart from the conscious effort of the artist. Therefore, sustained attention conflates the contrasting existential concepts with which Monadnock gains association—creating a permanent record of an impermanent impression and thus diversifying the appreciations of the mountain that invite association with the concept of permanence. As a consequence of sustained attention and the artistic invention that it yields, impermanent appreciations of Monadnock assume a kind of permanence in the mind of the artist, and the supposed permanence of the mountain becomes ever more nuanced as more impermanent appreciations of the mountain gain the artist's sustained attention.

Continuity

Sustained attention to Monadnock that precedes and accompanies the process of artistic invention comes ultimately to inspire a sense of continuity with the mountain. I use the term “continuity” here to describe an experiential phase in which Monadnock becomes an essential feature of conscious activity. This phase consists of two mutually inclusive experiential dimensions that follow from the association that Monadnock gains with an increasing amount and diversity of mental content during earlier phases of artistic engagement. As a consequence of this association, on the one hand, sensory and abstract appreciations of Monadnock come to summon experience of the mental content with which the mountain has gained association as well as reflection upon other experiences that trigger the same mental content. On the other hand, experiences apart from the mountain that trigger the mental content with which the mountain has

gained association have the effect of summoning appreciation of the mountain. During the final phase of artistic engagement with Monadnock, therefore, the preconceived existential distinction between the self and Monadnock becomes blurred and the artist comes to appreciate Monadnock as a part of the self and the self as a part of Monadnock.

This experience of continuity occurs when Monadnock comes to participate in the experiential dynamics of recollection. By virtue of the association that the mountain gains with past experiences or with the mental content that these experiences evoke, appreciation of Monadnock comes both to summon and to follow from the process of remembering. On the one hand, sensory and abstract appreciations of Monadnock can conjure memory of experiences associated with past engagement with the mountain. For example, Mary associates the memory of her father with a vantage from which she painted Monadnock regularly near the time of his death. Her experience of viewing Monadnock from that vantage now triggers a sense of the presence of her father that is rooted in her memory of the person he was. “My dad always says hi when I’m there. Always. He’s just sort of there over my shoulder,” she explained, “and he always checks in when I’m painting the mountain.” By virtue of the association that Monadnock gained with the memory of her father during earlier phases of artistic engagement with the mountain, therefore, Mary’s experience of viewing the mountain now summons the memory of her father. In a similar manner, Ernest’s abstract appreciation of Monadnock can trigger the memory of his parents. Following the emotional appreciation that he experienced while viewing the mountain from the landfill in Keene and the sustained attention that he devoted to the mountain while writing his novels, Ernest has come to identify Monadnock as a key factor in the circumstances that brought him into the world. “In a way,” he stated, “I have to credit Mount Monadnock with my very existence.” He went on to explain that his parents first met while his

mother was working as a nanny at the Cabot Estate in Dublin, which “was built high up on a hill to command a spectacular view of Mount Monadnock.” The appealing views of Monadnock that the estate afforded motivated the Cabot family to use the mansion as their primary residence, to employ a staff that included Ernest’s mother, and thus to initiate the circumstances that would bring Ernest into the world. As a consequence of the association that Monadnock gained with the first acquaintance of his parents, Ernest’s appreciation of the mountain now summons a familial memory of the events that underlie his existence. In common with Mary’s sensory appreciation of the mountain, Ernest’s abstract appreciation of Monadnock indicates the possibility for the mountain to summon memory of events and circumstances with which the mountain has gained association.

On the other hand, reflection upon mental content that has gained association with Monadnock in the past can summon abstract appreciation of the mountain. For example, Jim’s reflection upon the concept of the sublime conjures a memory of viewing an approaching thunderstorm while standing on the summit of Monadnock. With reference to the sublime in the thought of 19th century English art critic John Ruskin, Jim recalled “the one experience of Monadnock that I had, which I would say, in the Ruskin-y sense of the sublime, was one August day, I was up on the mountain.” He remembers, “the thunder had started to roll, and [the park ranger] was up there on the summit, shooing everybody off the summit, and [the ranger] said, ‘Jim, stay behind.’” “The thunderheads rolled in around us,” he remembers, “then the two of us headed down the lee side, and we hit the tree line just when the storm broke over our heads.” Jim has come to identify this experience as “one of the two experiences in my life I think was experiencing that sense of sublime in nature.” In Jim’s experience, therefore, reflection upon the concept of the sublime can summon a memory that comprises an abstract appreciation of

Monadnock. In a similar manner, Jill's reflection upon freedom and the creative spontaneity that freedom inspires can conjure a memory of sustained attention to Monadnock. Jill's association between freedom and Monadnock became apparent when she agreed to participate in a fundraising event at the Jaffrey Civic Center. The event required her in one hour to complete a painting from start to finish while a pianist seated in the same room performed classical music and an audience listened to the music and watched her as she painted. "I [didn't] come to the canvas with an idea in mind," she recalls. "I didn't even know if I would do a portrait format or landscape until the second I put my pallet knife to the canvas." Naturally, the work of completing the whole of a painting in such a short amount of time with no preconceived plan required Jill to resist her tendency toward self-consciousness and thus to cultivate the sense of creative freedom that she experienced while painting self-portraits in the presence of Monadnock. "The music was playing and I'm putting the colors down, and oh, it was just reverberating through my body, my soul." At the end of the hour, when she stepped back from her canvas and first appreciated her work as a viewer, she came to recognize that she had painted an abstract mountain that resembles Monadnock. "I just feel the mountain spoke to me," she stated with reference to Monadnock. Thus, Jill's effort to cultivate the sense of the freedom that she experienced in the presence of Monadnock prompted a kind of subliminal awareness of the mountain that gained expression on the canvas that she painted. In common with Jim's reflection upon the sublime, Jill's contemplation of freedom demonstrates the possibility for mental content that has gained association with Monadnock to summon abstract appreciation of the mountain.

The mutual engagement of Monadnock appreciation with personal memory and conceptual reflection in the experience of those who have sustained attention to the mountain produces an existential sense of reciprocity with the mountain. This is an awareness of the

holistic way in which appreciation of Monadnock forms the interconnected material and immaterial dimensions of experience, on the one hand, and the ways in which these dimensions constitute appreciation of the mountain, on the other. In short, it is a deeply felt recognition that Monadnock is an essential part of a broader experiential setting that makes people who they are and that who people are, in turn, conditions the way in which the mountain appeals to them.

This awareness gains expression through an evolving sense of intimacy with Monadnock that gradually gives nuance to one's appreciation of the mountain. As a sense of familiarity with Monadnock increases, therefore, the appreciation that the mountain seems to summon becomes progressively less monolithic and progressively more multifaceted. For example, Jim's sustained attention to Monadnock has yielded an affinity for the mountain that continues to increase in complexity. If you have engaged with the mountain, he observes, "you don't see it as a mass when looking. It becomes much more intimate. You're looking and ... it's as though you're looking into the tree line, looking at the trails ... registering the rocks underneath what you're seeing." Thus, the complex geographical awareness that Jim gained from sustained attention to Monadnock inspires with each of the mountain's various features a distinctive sense of intimacy that undermines gradually a monolithic appreciation of the mountain. In a similar manner, Mary's sense of intimacy with Monadnock has developed as she has come to recognize increasing variation in the mountain's appearance. The mountain "starts revealing itself to you in layers ... these layers of color," she observed. "But then it starts telling you more and more beautiful things." Each of these revelations prompts a stronger sense of familiarity with the mountain. Thus, Mary observed, "bit by bit over the years, I started to feel that overarching presence more and more." "Recently," she continued, "I'm feeling ... like [Monadnock is] a mother hen and it's saying, 'I think you're one of mine. You're here. You keep coming here.'

And it's a really wonderful feeling." Thus, Mary's sense of intimacy with Monadnock increases as her appreciation of the mountain becomes more complex. In common with Mary, Ernest gains a sense of intimacy with Monadnock from an appreciation of the mountain as a parental kind of presence. This appreciation follows from his aforementioned awareness of the mountain's role in establishing his family of origin and bringing him into existence. Finally, Jill's sense of freedom, gained from sustained attention to Monadnock, and her appreciation of the mountain as a feature of the larger geographical setting that she inhabits inspires in her a sense of intimacy with the whole of the Monadnock region. "It's beautiful, it's just beautiful," she stated with reference to Monadnock, "but it's more than just Monadnock, Jonathan. It's me. It's me in the area. ... It's the silence, it's the beauty that surrounds me." She went on to observe, "here I am in my environment and looking out in the woods, in the clearing of the wetland, and the light, how it just envelops this room so many different ways and I love it." Thus, the experience of freedom that Jill underwent while sustaining attention to Monadnock has come to inspire a sense of intimacy with the mountain and the region that it defines. Thus, in the experience of all of my participants, an increasing awareness of the complexity of Monadnock or the role that it assumes in human affairs inspires a sense of intimacy with the mountain that can prompt an awareness of the experiential interplay of established ways of knowing and the appreciation that the mountain seems to summon.

As the increasing complexity of Monadnock appreciation inspires an evolving sense of intimacy with the mountain, so too does it prompt a developing awareness of some unknown quality—some mysterious dimension—that defies intellectual circumscription but nonetheless reveals itself gradually with each experience of viewing the mountain from a new vantage or considering the mountain in association with new mental content. Jill conveyed this sense of the

mysteriousness of Monadnock in her reluctance to subordinate to the parameters of a rational explanation the sense of freedom that she experienced while painting self-portraits in the presence of the mountain. I asked, “how do you think the mountain ... participated in that whole experience...” “Maybe it was spiritual,” she interrupted. “I don’t know. I don't know, because I don't like to be maybe so thoughtful? When thoughtful is important and it relates, yes. But I just know that I loved looking at that mountain, so if I love it and I feel so good inside, I just wasn't so critical.” Jill’s resistance to my effort to capture the whole of her experience of Monadnock in a rational explanation indicates the appeal and the persistent influence of something unknown and therefore inexplicable in her encounter with the mountain—something to which she might lose experiential access were she to subject it to critical interpretation. In common with Jill, Mary expressed opposition to the idea that a rational explanation might encompass her experience of appreciating Monadnock. The effort to subordinate experience of the mountain to an intellectual explanation, she observed, is “sort of like saying, ‘I love my baby. I wonder how it came to be formed.’” “It’s a visceral thing,” she continued. “You're driving along and you see it, and it's magnificent in every way, and you can feel it's got a spiritual power there.” In the interest of preserving the integrity of her experience of appreciating Monadnock, therefore, Mary resists any effort to reduce its mysterious power by deconstructing it into explicable components. Jim demonstrated a similar sort of unwillingness to rationalize his experience of mystery in association with Monadnock. He addressed the summit of the mountain as a place apart from the domain of human habitation. As such, he observed, the summit summons an emotional experience that is irreducible to any of the rational constructs that we use to understand our experiences in the familiar settings that we inhabit. The summit of Monadnock, he observed, is “other space ... out of the ordinary below world that you live in,” and as a consequence, the

experience of being on the summit is “one of separation.” “To blur that boundary” between the alien summit of Monadnock and the familiar valley below, he argues, “is to set up a certain kind of emotional confusion.” Jim’s appreciation of the persistent otherness of Monadnock’s summit and his acknowledgement of the unfavorable consequences that can come from engaging it as though it were a familiar setting of human habitation speak to a sense of the unknown that Monadnock summons. In contrast to Jim, Ernest experiences a sense of the unknown in association with the familiarity of the view of Monadnock on the horizon. He regularly experiences a sense of home when he observes the mountain on the horizon. After I asked him to explain more precisely what he means by “home,” he stated “I can’t tell you where a home is but when I’m there, I know where it is.” Thus, in a manner similar to Jill, Mary, and Jim, Ernest expressed at once a reluctance to subject to critical interpretation an emotional appreciation of Monadnock and a preference to maintain a sense of the mysterious in association with his experience of the mountain.

To the extent that these senses of intimacy and the unknown inspire ongoing engagement with Monadnock, they also help to establish the mountain as a kind of communal presence that brings people together and that summons abstract appreciation among those who participate in collective activity. The mountain engages principally in the community of people who live in the region of southwestern New Hampshire. According to Jim, Monadnock appreciation fosters a sense of regional community in an area that is otherwise divided into small municipalities. He came to discover the mountain’s unifying presence in the work that he undertook to encourage people to assemble in remembrance of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Based on his observation of “the particular New Hampshire phenomenon that we all live in small towns” and an awareness that drawing sufficient attention to the bombings and the harm

associated with nuclear weapons required the collaboration of people living in various towns in the region, Jim and his associates “chose to make Monadnock into that unifying symbol... or, to take advantage of the fact that it already was” a symbol of regional unity. Thus, they decided to call themselves the Monadnock Peace Coalition and to host vigils of remembrance every year on the summit of the mountain during the week when the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan in 1945. In the process of planning and hosting these vigils, Jim came to recognize the potential for the mountain to encourage the sense of community that peace requires. In a similar manner, Jill included Monadnock among the features of her experience of living in Cheshire County that afford her the connected senses of community and artistic inspiration. “It’s not just Monadnock,” she observed. “It’s me. It’s me in the area. I could never give credit to one thing, but it’s an area that is filled with so many talented, gifted people, so I feel that energy ... and it reaches me.” Thus, Jill’s appreciation of Monadnock prompts her to reflect upon the community of people to which she belongs and to consider the ways in which the mountain and the community together inspire her to produce art. In a similar manner, the sense of home that Ernest experiences when he views Monadnock on the horizon summons a memory of his parents whose acquaintance he attributes to the mountain. Thus, the mountain inspires Ernest’s sense of belonging to the community of his family of origin. While the experiences of Jim, Jill, and Ernest indicate the possibility for Monadnock appreciation to trigger a sense of community, Mary’s experience indicates the possibility for communal activity, in turn, to inspire an appreciation of the mountain. Mary discovered this possibility when the owner of a local gallery invited her and other visual artists in the region to create art that conveys what living in the Monadnock region means to them. In response to this prompt, Mary submitted a painting of Nelson. “I have always felt like I was terrified to cross the border into Nelson,” she explained, “because I’m not a

musician and I'm not a dancer, and that place is a hotbed of fabulous musicians.” In the process of completing and submitting the painting, she came for the first time to feel a sense of community with the people of Nelson. After finishing the painting, she noted “I felt okay saying I'm part of this, part of the Monadnock Region ... even though it was Nelson.... And I'm not really afraid of [Nelson] anymore so much since that.” When I asked her to explain the connection between this sense of community and Monadnock, she stated, the mountain’s “presence was there in that whole feeling.” In common with Jim, Jill, and Ernest, therefore, Mary came to appreciate Monadnock in association with an experience of community engagement.

In addition to interacting with a regional sense of community, Monadnock can gain association with a global sense of connection such that appreciation of the mountain both inspires and follows from a sense of unity with distant people and places. Jim came to experience this sense of unity in association with Monadnock during the aforementioned vigils that he and his associates in the Monadnock Peace Coalition organized on the summit of the mountain to encourage remembrance of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He implied that the location of the vigil on the summit of the mountain—the highest elevation in southwestern New Hampshire—seemed to remove the process of remembering from the familiar context of daily experience in the valley below and thus to encourage a more vivid acknowledgment of the destruction that the bombs caused and the people whom they killed or maimed. On Monadnock, he observed, the process of sitting vigil “really is lifting up, [it] becomes international then” and involves the work of “looking across, or reaching across” from the height of a mountain in eastern North America to the cities and the lives that the bombs destroyed across the globe in Japan. He explained further that “Fukuyama and Monadnock are the most climbed mountains in the world” and that “this factoid” “gave ... significance” to the vigils on Monadnock. Thus, he

observed between Monadnock and Mount Fuji a parallelism of status, and he noted that the experience of sitting vigil on Monadnock gained from this parallelism a depth of meaning that no other location in the region could have afforded. Jim's experience indicates the possibility for appreciation of Monadnock both to inspire and to follow from a global sense of connection.

The sense of continuity with Monadnock that is the ultimate phase of artistic engagement with the mountain emerges from the association that the mountain gains with a diversity of mental content during earlier phases of artistic engagement. This mental content includes all of the stuff of past personal experience and conceptual reflection. The interaction of this mental content with Monadnock appreciation can produce a feeling of intimacy, a compelling awareness of the unknown, and a sense of local and global community. All of these experiential dimensions can either presume or follow from abstract or sensory appreciation of Monadnock. As a result of the engagement of Monadnock appreciation with an increasing amount and diversity of mental content, the boundaries between self and the mountain gradually blur and an awareness emerges of the extent to which appreciation of the mountain constitutes lived experience and lived experience, in turn, informs the meaning that appreciation of the mountain carries.

Variability of Scale

The phenomenon of artistic engagement with Monadnock describes a continuum of lived experience that spans the creation of a single artistic composition, at one extreme, and an entire career of addressing the mountain as a principal subject, on the other. The five phases that I have explained in the foregoing discussion constitute an experiential process that describes artistic engagement with the mountain generally and encompasses, therefore, each and all of the gradations of lived experience that this continuum spans; however, the character and the duration of each of the phases of this process depend upon the scale of an individual's artistic engagement

with the mountain. To draw attention both to the descriptive flexibility of the process that I have discerned and to the extent to which the character of its phases hinges upon the scale of the lived experience that they describe, I will discuss the different ways in which the process illumines lived experiences that are at each end of the continuum of artistic engagement with Monadnock.

On the one hand, the five phases describe an experiential process that artists undergo while completing a single artistic composition in association with Monadnock. When used to describe a process of such specificity, each of the five phases occurs relatively quickly and follows soon after the phase that precedes it. Thus, the first encounter describes the artist's discovery of the particular Monadnock appreciation that comes to inspire an artistic composition. Abstract appreciation describes subsequent reflection upon that particular first encounter with the mountain. Existential understanding describes the process by which the artist comes to associate this abstract appreciation with the existential categories of permanence and impermanence. Sustained attention, in turn, describes the artist's uninterrupted concentration upon the mountain while producing the particular composition. Finally, continuity describes the sense of reciprocity with Monadnock that emerges from the experience of creating that particular composition in association with the mountain. When used in this way to describe the creation of a single composition, therefore, this process describes an experience that can occur in a relatively short amount of time.

On the other hand, the five phases describe an experiential process that occurs over the course of an entire career of artistic engagement with Monadnock. When used to describe a process of such extended duration, all of the phases other than the first encounter encompass multiple appreciations of the mountain that the artist experiences over the course of a prolonged period of time. While the first encounter remains a singular experience that immediately

precedes abstract appreciation, it precedes by a longer period of time the other three phases. Abstract appreciation, in turn, describes a prolonged period of reflection upon the appeal of the mountain generally that is often informed by multiple appreciations of the mountain. Existential understanding describes a prolonged period of interpreting these appreciations of the mountain in association with the concepts of permanence and impermanence. Sustained attention, in turn, describes the whole of an artist's experience of composing art in association with the mountain. Finally, continuity describes the sense of reciprocity with the mountain that the artist gains from an extended period of artistic engagement with Monadnock. When used in this way to describe a whole career of artistic engagement with the mountain, therefore, this process describes an experience that occurs over the course of an extended period of time.

The hermeneutic phenomenological interviews that I have conducted and the circular method of phenomenological theme analysis that I have used to interpret them have disclosed artistic engagement with Monadnock as a series of nested processes each of which gains significance from its association with all others. As the particular process of creating a single artistic composition in association with Monadnock helps to define the broader process of creating multiple compositions in association with the mountain, so this broader process helps to determine the character and the significance of each of the particular processes of artistic engagement that it comprises. This interaction between the parts and the whole of the lived experience of artistic engagement with Monadnock, in turn, gains meaning from the established ways of knowing that constitute the forestructure of each artist's lived experience. Ultimately, the reciprocal dynamics between the forestructure, the parts, and the whole of the lived experience of artistic engagement with Monadnock increases the complexity of an artist's

appreciation of the mountain and prompts increasing recognition of the extent to which the self and the mountain each engage in the creation of the other.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the results of my research. Following a summary explanation of the tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology and the interpretive methods that complement these tenets, I have offered biographical synopses of each of my participants. These synopses present information that constitutes the forestructure of each participant's lived experience of artistic engagement with Monadnock. The information that I presented in each participant's biographical synopsis, therefore, formed the backdrop against which I interpreted that participant's experience of artistic engagement with the mountain. The circular process of phenomenological theme analysis that I used to interpret the experience of my participants disclosed an experiential process that comprises five phases: first encounter, abstract appreciation, existential understanding, sustained attention, and continuity. Following a detailed explanation of each of these phases, I discussed the ways in which they illumine experience of artistic engagement with Monadnock at multiple scales. In the next chapter, I will discuss the broader conceptual implications of the process that my interpretation revealed.

CHAPTER V: ARTISTIC INVENTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH MONADNOCK AND ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS: THE RECIPROCAL DISCLOSURE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE AND THE CONCEPT OF ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

This chapter conveys the understanding that emerged during the penultimate stage of my interpretation of the phenomenon of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. Here, I will work to establish consistency between the lived experiential process that I discerned in the preceding chapter and the established concepts that describe this experiential process most directly. Such a consistency will arise from the work of interpreting the experiential process of my participants from the standpoint of established concepts, on the one hand, and from the work of revising established concepts so that they reflect more exactly the lived experience that they are meant to describe, on the other. By means of this circular interpretive movement back and forth between lived experience and conceptual understanding, my interpretation will furnish a broader and more precise understanding of the experiential process of artistic invention in association with Monadnock and will give nuance to the concepts that I have used to understand this experiential process.

In what follows, I will demonstrate the congruence of the experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock and certain essential concepts in the field of environmental aesthetics. After explaining summarily my decision to interpret artistic invention in association with Monadnock in conjunction with environmental aesthetics, I will address artistic invention in association with Monadnock as a non-conceptual environmental aesthetic experience. In accordance with the circular process of interpretation in hermeneutic phenomenology, I will interpret the experiential process of my participants from the standpoint of concepts in the field

of non-conceptual environmental aesthetics and I will critique non-conceptual environmental aesthetic concepts, in turn, from the standpoint of my participants' experiential process.

In particular, I will observe that the experience of my participants aligns with the non-conceptual environmental aesthetic concept of engagement, and I will argue that conscious awareness of aesthetic engagement evolves gradually in the process of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. From the standpoint of the lived experience of my research participants, I will elaborate upon an aforementioned point of tension between the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of the concept of engagement and I will argue that the process of artistic invention in association with Monadnock exemplifies the possibility of resolving this point of tension in the experience of the artist.

Environmental Aesthetics and Artistic Invention in Association with Monadnock

My decision to interpret artistic invention in association with Monadnock and environmental aesthetics each from the standpoint of the other followed from my observation of the common experience that motivated my research participants to interact artistically with the mountain. As I discussed in the preceding chapter, all of my participants attributed their interest in creating art in association with Monadnock to their initial experiences of being captivated by the view of the mountain on the horizon. These "first encounters," as I described them in the preceding chapter, and the four experiential phases that followed from them, aligned with my established understanding of environmental aesthetic appreciation. Thus, I read widely in the field of environmental aesthetics and I came to recognize the potential for environmental aesthetics to disclose deeper layers of meaning in the lived experiences of my participants and for these experiences, in turn, to add nuance to established environmental aesthetic concepts.

In the interest of carrying out this hermeneutic circular interpretive process of reciprocal disclosure, I worked to establish consonance between the features of my research study and the field of environmental aesthetics. Thus, I moved back and forth between the tasks of aligning the general and the specific features of my research study and the field of environmental aesthetics and ultimately established a consonance between the experiential process that I discussed in the preceding chapter and the defining concept of a particular environmental aesthetic model. As a consequence, I came to understand artistic invention in association with Monadnock from the standpoint of a particular environmental aesthetic concept and to understand that concept, in turn, from the standpoint of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. This latter understanding revealed the process by which that environmental aesthetic concept becomes subject to conscious awareness and thus added nuance to the established understanding of that concept by revealing the ways in which that concept functions in lived experience.

In what follows, I will discuss the process by which I established consonance between artistic invention in association with Monadnock and the field of environmental aesthetics. In this discussion, I will proceed from explaining the alignment of the broadest features to addressing the alignment of progressively more specific features of both subjects. Thus, I will begin by discussing the alignment of the phenomenological philosophy that inspired my research interests, on the one hand, with one of the two branches of environmental aesthetics, on the other; next, I will discuss the alignment of the hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy that informed my research design with a particular aesthetic model within that branch of environmental aesthetics; finally, I will discuss the process of aligning the experiential process that I discerned in the preceding chapter with the defining concept of that particular aesthetic

model. I will conclude by discussing the reciprocal disclosure of artistic invention in association with Monadnock and that particular environmental aesthetic concept.

Phenomenology and Environmental Aesthetics

Given the objective of hermeneutic circular interpretation to establish agreement between the parts and the whole of an interpreted subject, the work of aligning empirical research with an established academic discipline necessarily addresses the philosophical basis of the research and the discipline alike. For, only if they are consonant fundamentally can empirical research and an academic discipline be mutually informative. With regard to the work of interpreting artistic invention in association with Monadnock, the necessity of this fundamental alignment demands that I interpret my phenomenological empirical research from the standpoint of an academic discipline that presumes the principles and the methods of phenomenology. For, only an academic discipline that presumes the interpretive primacy of lived experience can help to disclose the lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. In what follows, I will align my empirical research with one of the two branches of environmental aesthetics. More specifically, I will explain vis-a-vis artistic invention in association with Monadnock the incongruence of conceptual environmental aesthetic models and the consonance of non-conceptual environmental aesthetic models, and thus, I will align my research with the non-conceptual branch of environmental aesthetics.

On the one hand, the prescriptive purpose of conceptual aesthetics is irreconcilable with the descriptive purpose of the phenomenology that governed my research on artistic invention in association with Monadnock. In opposition to phenomenology, conceptual aesthetic inquiry begins with established, abstract concepts and seeks to make sense of these concepts from the standpoint of established knowledge. More specifically, conceptual aesthetic models presume an

established understanding of aesthetic appreciation and appeal to various genres of established knowledge to explain this understanding. Thus, conceptual aesthetics seeks to explain how aesthetic appreciation should (and should not) be understood. On the contrary, phenomenological inquiry pursues the more rudimentary purpose of describing what a phenomenon of interest actually is. Therefore, rather than seeking to articulate an established understanding, in the manner of conceptual aesthetics, phenomenological inquiry begins from a standpoint of comparative uncertainty and pursues discovery of undisclosed dimensions of a phenomenon of interest. Therefore, instead of appealing principally to established knowledge as a means of explaining a phenomenon of interest, phenomenological inquiry appeals to lived human experience and thus seeks to disclose the most rudimentary experiential dimensions of a phenomenon—dimensions that established knowledge tends at once to presume and to conceal. By means of disclosing these experiential dimensions, phenomenological inquiry pursues rich description of a phenomenon of interest that might be used to assess the precision of pertinent established knowledge. These fundamental differences between conceptual aesthetics and the phenomenology that inspired my research interests negate the possibility of interpreting in conjunction with any conceptual aesthetic model the conclusions that I have drawn from my research on artistic invention in association with *Monadnock*.

On the other hand, the common descriptive purpose of non-conceptual aesthetics and phenomenology permits the interpretation of phenomenological research in conjunction with non-conceptual aesthetic models. Indeed, the consonance of non-conceptual models and phenomenology has prompted some environmental aestheticians to identify non-conceptual

aesthetics as the phenomenological branch of environmental aesthetics.¹ In accordance with phenomenology, non-conceptual aesthetics identifies lived experience (rather than established conceptual thought) as a principal source of understanding. In the interest of describing aesthetic appreciation, therefore, non-conceptual aesthetic inquiry begins by examining the lived experience of environmental perception. Also in accordance with phenomenology, non-conceptual aesthetics identifies immersion as a defining feature of lived experience.² In non-conceptual aesthetics, as in phenomenology, this immersion consists of an interaction of matter and consciousness that challenges the dualism of conceptual interpretation. Thus, non-conceptual aesthetic models oppose the strict distinction that conceptual aesthetics maintains between percipients and perceived objects and identify various experiential modes as media of the sense of immersion that defines environmental aesthetic appreciation. Finally, in accordance with phenomenology, non-conceptual aesthetics assesses the precision of established concepts from the standpoint of conclusions drawn from lived experience. Based upon conclusions drawn from the lived experience of environmental perception in particular, therefore, non-conceptual models affirm or oppose elements of established understandings of aesthetic appreciation. The consonance of these features that are fundamental to non-conceptual aesthetics and phenomenology permits the use of each in conjunction with the other.

¹ Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics" (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2020, accessed on August 31, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/environmental-aesthetics/>; Arnold Berleant, "A Phenomenological Aesthetics of Environment" in *Aesthetics and Environment: Variations on a Theme* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 3–16.

² Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics."

The research that I have conducted on artistic invention in association with Monadnock presumes the general principles of phenomenology. The incompatibility of these principles with the conceptual branch of environmental aesthetics precludes conceptual aesthetic interpretation of phenomenological research. Conversely, the compatibility of phenomenological principles with the non-conceptual branch of environmental aesthetics permits non-conceptual aesthetic interpretation of phenomenological research. Thus, I will interpret from the standpoint of non-conceptual aesthetics the phenomenological research that I have conducted on artistic invention in association with Monadnock.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Berleant's Aesthetics of Engagement

While the phenomenological principles that inspired my research interests align with the principles of non-conceptual aesthetics in general, the hermeneutic phenomenological principles that informed the design and the interpretation of my field research contradict the defining features of some non-conceptual aesthetic models and affirm the defining features of others. More specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology presumes a unified ontology that contradicts the dualism of non-conceptual models that identify aesthetic appreciation with imagination, mystery, and arousal, on the one hand, and complements the singularity of consciousness and the world that underlies Berleant's aesthetics of engagement, on the other. In what follows, I will review the defining principles of hermeneutic phenomenology and explain their incompatibility and their consonance with these respective non-conceptual models. Thus, I will justify the reciprocal interpretation of artistic invention in association with Monadnock and Berleant's aesthetics of engagement.

While phenomenology addresses lived experience as a kind of knowing, hermeneutic phenomenology addresses lived experience as a kind of being.³ This distinction follows from the different way in which hermeneutic phenomenology conceptualizes the relationship between mental activity and the context in which such activity occurs. Phenomenology, on the one hand, identifies mental activity as both transcendental and intentional.⁴ That is to say, according to phenomenology, the activity of the mind precedes interaction with material objects, but this activity is directed outward toward the objects of the material world. Thus, phenomenology at once maintains the existential distinction between matter and consciousness and supposes the operation of the mind in conjunction with material points of reference. Hermeneutic phenomenology, on the other hand, addresses consciousness and the world as a singular entity the indivisibility of which precludes any effort to attribute experience to any particular material or immaterial locus.⁵ As being is inextricable from the world, so lived experience is inextricable from the context in which such experience occurs. In a given situation, therefore, the whole that is being-in-the-world constitutes the fore-structure of appreciation, determining a priori the phenomena that summon interest, the nature of the interest that they summon, and the kind of meaning that they carry.⁶ In the process of interpretation—a process that Heidegger identifies as

³ Lavery, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations," 31.

⁴ Lavery, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations," 23.

⁵ Lavery, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations," 24.

⁶ William V. Spanos, "Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and the Hermeneutic Circle: Towards a Postmodern Theory of Interpretation as Dis-closure," *Boundary* 4, no. 2 (1976), 457.

an instance of “the world show[ing] itself”⁷—being-in-the-world comes to understand lived experience from the standpoint of established ways of knowing and established ways of knowing from the standpoint of lived experience.

As a consequence of this supposition of the singularity of being and the world, hermeneutic phenomenology is incompatible with non-conceptual aesthetic models that identify aesthetic appreciation with a particular mental process. Such models presume the dualism of consciousness and the world—a dualism that phenomenology upholds and hermeneutic phenomenology opposes. For example, Hepburn, Mikkonen, and Brady’s respective aesthetics of imagination presume between consciousness and the environment a distinction that the intentional activity of the imagination overcomes during an experience of aesthetic appreciation. Godlovitch’s aesthetics of mystery and Carroll’s aesthetics of arousal presume the same distinction but attribute its reconciliation to different mental processes: Godlovitch to a sense of mystery and Carroll to an experience of arousal. In accordance with phenomenology, therefore, aesthetics of imagination, mystery, and arousal identify aesthetic appreciation as an experience in which a specific mental process unifies the otherwise distinct experiential dimensions of consciousness and the world. Hermeneutic phenomenology, however, identifies the unity of consciousness and the world as the defining feature of being-in-the-world and thus denies the distinction that these non-conceptual models presume. As a consequence, hermeneutic phenomenology identifies as the basis of aesthetic appreciation the unity of consciousness and

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 73.

the world that is the culmination of aesthetic appreciation according to the aesthetics of imagination, mystery, and arousal. Moreover, this unity encompasses any and all factors that condition lived experience. In opposition to the aesthetics of imagination, mystery, and arousal, all of which address a single dimension of experience, therefore, hermeneutic phenomenology addresses a diversity of experiential factors. Thus, the incompatibility with hermeneutic phenomenology of the ontology that these non-conceptual models presume and the breadth of the experiential factors that they address precludes the use of these models in the interpretation of hermeneutic phenomenological research.

Unlike the dualistic ontology that underlies the aesthetics of imagination, mystery, and arousal, Berleant's aesthetics of engagement presumes the unity of consciousness and the world and thus complements the ontology of hermeneutic phenomenology. The defining concept of Berleant's aesthetic model indicates the unity that the model maintains between the inner and outer experiential dimensions that condition aesthetic appreciation. Whereas other non-conceptual models attribute aesthetic appreciation to an abstract property of consciousness such as imagination, mystery, and arousal that bridges the supposed existential distinction between consciousness and the world, Berleant attributes aesthetic appreciation to the dynamic interaction of inner and outer experiential dimensions, the a priori singularity of which, constitutes lived experience. Thus, he observes, "Inside and outside, consciousness and world, human being and natural processes are not pairs of opposites but aspects of the same thing: the unity of the human

environment.”⁸ The holism and the singularity of engagement according to Berleant resembles closely Heidegger and Gadamer’s understanding of being-in-the-world as a singular entity and his consequent insistence it “must be seen as a whole.”⁹ Moreover, the monistic ontology that underlies Berleant’s aesthetic model and hermeneutic phenomenology allows both to address the broadest possible diversity of factors that condition lived experience. Unlike other non-conceptual models that identify aesthetic appreciation with a particular inner experiential dimension, the interaction that defines lived experience according to Berleant’s aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology encompasses any and all experiential factors. As a consequence of the common conceptions of being and lived experience that they presume, Berleant’s aesthetics of engagement can be used in conjunction with hermeneutic phenomenology.

In the foregoing discussion, I have explained the consonance of my research on artistic invention in association with Monadnock with a particular model in the non-conceptual branch of environmental aesthetics. Since I designed, carried out, and interpreted this research in accordance with the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology, I have acknowledged that the model in conjunction with which I interpret my research must be compatible with the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology. Based upon this premise, I have argued that hermeneutic phenomenology is incompatible with the aesthetics of imagination, mystery, and arousal, on the one hand, and compatible with Berleant’s aesthetics of engagement, on the other. I have argued that the compatibility and the incompatibility of these respective non-conceptual models follows

⁸ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 11–12.

⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 79.

from the ontology that the models presume and the consequent breadth of the experiential dimensions that they address. Thus, I have argued that aesthetic models that attribute aesthetic appreciation to an abstract mental process, such as imagination, mystery, and arousal, presume a dualistic understanding of being that contradicts the singularity of consciousness and the world according to hermeneutic phenomenology and that focuses too specifically on a single dimension of experience. Therefore, I have concluded that such models are incompatible with hermeneutic phenomenology. Conversely, I have argued that Berleant's aesthetics of engagement presumes a unified ontology that resembles closely with the hermeneutic phenomenological notion of being-in-the-world and that encompasses all experiential dimensions. Therefore, I have argued that Berleant's model is compatible with hermeneutic phenomenology.

The Reciprocal Disclosure of Artistic Invention in Association with Monadnock and Berleant's Aesthetics of Engagement

The purpose of hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation, as Heidegger claimed, is to "let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself."¹⁰ The potential for a phenomenon to disclose itself in this way and thus to determine the way in which an interpreter understands it hinges on the interpreter's ability to distinguish in their understanding the influence of established concepts from those features of a phenomenon that lived experience discloses. Given the inextricability of being and the world according to Heidegger and Gadamer and the rudimentary way in which fore-structures constitute lived

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 58.

experience as a consequence, this interpretive requirement poses a significant challenge. The interpreter overcomes this challenge gradually in the hermeneutic circular process of interpretation.¹¹ In this interpretive process, the interpreter necessarily appreciates a phenomenon from the standpoint of established concepts, but also observes aspects of the phenomenon that these concepts fail adequately to address. By moving back and forth between concepts and lived experience, the interpreter works to resolve the discrepancy between these two kinds of understanding. Resolution occurs gradually as the interpreter comes to appreciate and to revise concepts and lived experience each from the standpoint of the other so that each discloses the other more precisely.

In accordance with this circular interpretive process, I considered artistic invention in association with Monadnock in conjunction with Berleant's concept of engagement. Thus, I came to understand artistic invention in association with Monadnock from the standpoint of engagement and engagement from the standpoint of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. As I moved back and forth between the concept of engagement and the lived experience of my research participants, I came to recognize both the consonance and the dissonance between these two media of understanding my research phenomenon. On the one hand, I came to understand artistic invention in association with Monadnock as an experience of engagement. On the other hand, I came to appreciate limitations in the established concept of engagement that prevented it from disclosing precisely the experience of my participants. In an

¹¹ Bontekoe, *Dimensions of the Hermeneutic Circle*, 61.

effort to resolve the discrepancy between the concept of engagement and the experience of my research participants, therefore, I conceived revisions to the concept of engagement.

In what follows, I will discuss the results of this circular interpretive process. For the purpose of defining in greater detail Berleant's concept of engagement, I will begin by explaining each of the experiential components that it comprises. Next, I will explain the lived experience of my research participants from the standpoint of Berleant's concept of engagement. In this portion of my discussion, I will observe that experience of aesthetic engagement with Monadnock is a principal source of motivation for artistic invention in association with Monadnock. Moreover, I will note that artistic invention in association with Monadnock, in turn, increases the conscious awareness of engagement that inspired such artistic invention in the first place. Next, I will consider the concept of engagement from the standpoint of the experience of my research participants. In this portion of my discussion, I will observe a point of tension between the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of Berleant's concept of engagement. More specifically, I will note that the paradoxical manner in which the nature of engagement (the descriptive dimension) itself inhibits the conscious awareness of engagement (the prescriptive dimension) that Berleant recommends. Finally, I will argue that artistic invention in association with Monadnock has the potential both to disclose and to resolve this point of tension in the experience of the artist and thus to fulfill the objective of Berleant's aesthetic model.

Berleant's Concept of Engagement

In accordance with the singular ontology that underlies his aesthetics, Berleant addresses aesthetic appreciation of environment as a perceptual experience in which the whole of an environment comes to disclose itself. While the percipient serves as a vehicle for the expression of this disclosure, the percipient is also part of the environment that discloses itself and the world

in which this environment becomes disclosed. Berleant conceives of this unity of percipient and the perceived environment as an experience of engagement in which the whole of a percipient merges with the perceived world and functions at once as agent and subject in a process of reciprocal constitution. Thus, Berleant defines aesthetic engagement as “a condition of perceptual activity and response that so captures the sensibilities of its participants that we have continuity rather than separation, involvement rather than isolation and distance.”¹² In this perceptual activity, the percipient and the environment “each becomes the complement of the other.”¹³ For the purpose of explaining the reciprocal disclosure of Berleant’s concept of engagement and artistic invention in association with *Monadnock*, I will, in what follows, explain the finer details of engagement. I will focus my explanation in particular on assimilated knowledge, perceptual activity, and continuity—three principles that are essential to the concept of engagement and pertinent to the experience of artistic invention in association with *Monadnock*.

In accordance with the hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy of Heidegger and Gadamer, Berleant affirms the idea that established ways of knowing are essential to lived experience. More specifically, he observes that assimilated knowledge helps to determine the subject and the quality of aesthetic engagement by guiding a percipient’s attention toward some features of the world and away from others and by determining the particular way in which a percipient appreciates those features that summon aesthetic attention. With reference to the

¹² Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 97.

¹³ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 97.

perceptual activity that prompts engagement, Berleant observes, “perception has an aura to which memory, knowledge, and the conditioning and habits of the body all contribute. As inseparable dimensions of direct sensory experiences,” he continues, “these affect the range as well as the character of any environment, for even when we do not apprehend something directly in sensation, it can still affect us physically and so perceptually.”¹⁴ Further, Berleant notes that “we carry our knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes with us, for these participate in the process of experience and enable us to structure and interpret it.”¹⁵ Based upon his observation that all of these forms of assimilated knowledge reflect the influence of a percipient’s culture of origin, Berleant argues against popular assumption of the subjectivity of aesthetic engagement. The cultural basis of assimilated knowledge, he argues, indicates “that aesthetic valuation is not a purely personal experience, ‘subjective,’ as it is often mistakenly called, but a social one. In engaging aesthetically with environment ...,” he continues, “the knowledge, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes we have are largely social, cultural, and historical in origin. These direct our attention, open or close us to what is happening, and prepare or impede our participation.”¹⁶ Thus, he concludes “here as elsewhere, the personal is infused with the social.”¹⁷ According to Berleant, therefore, assimilated knowledge that presumes human cultural influence determines beforehand the subject and the quality of aesthetic engagement.

¹⁴ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 3.

¹⁵ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 13.

¹⁶ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 13.

¹⁷ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 13.

While assimilated knowledge gives rise to rudimentary understanding of an environment, perceptual activity serves as a medium for the environmental immersion that aesthetic engagement comprises. In opposition to cognitive and other non-conceptual aesthetic models that address perception as a passive response to an aesthetic object, Berleant conceives of perception as an active undertaking that helps to constitute an experience of aesthetic engagement. “Perception is not passive,” he argues, “but an active reciprocal engagement with the environment.”¹⁸ Thus, Berleant affirms “the formative contribution of the perceiver in the aesthetic experience of environment.”¹⁹ Further, he notes that this creative perceptual activity engages all of the senses. In opposition to the traditional aesthetic preoccupation with visual experience, therefore, Berleant conceives of environmental aesthetic experience as “an inclusive perceptual system [that] includes such factors as space, mass, volume, time, movement, color, light, smell, sound, tactility, kinesthesia, pattern, order, and meaning.”²⁰ Further, he notes “environmental experience here is not exclusively visual but actively involves all the sensory modalities synaesthetically, engaging the participant in intense awareness.”²¹ Since the human body mediates the sensory experience upon which aesthetic engagement hinges, Berleant emphasizes the somatic dimension of engagement. Thus, he argues ultimately that “aesthetic appreciation, like all experience, is an engagement of the body, a body aesthetic.”²² (*Living in*

¹⁸ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 18.

¹⁹ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 32.

²⁰ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 32.

²¹ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 32.

²² Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 111.

the Landscape, 111). Thus, Berleant defines engagement as an embodied sensory interaction with environment that helps to create an experience of aesthetic appreciation.

Finally, in accordance with Heidegger and Gadamer's understanding of the hermeneutic circle, Berleant attributes to the reciprocal constitution of assimilated knowledge and perceptual activity in an experience of aesthetic engagement a continuity between the percipient and all other components of an environment. While Berleant acknowledges the importance of allowing assimilated knowledge and perceptual activity each to condition appreciation of the other, he places greater emphasis upon the importance of allowing perceptual activity to condition assimilated knowledge. "Human perception blends memories, beliefs, and associations," he observes, "and this range deepens experience. The essential problem here is to keep the meanings true to the directness of sensory awareness and not to edit the awareness to fit our customary meanings."²³ This effort to establish agreement between the respective content of assimilated knowledge and sensory experience yields a sense of existential continuity with the environment and, more generally, an awareness of the interconnection of being. "We are ... continuous with environment," argues Berleant. "Environment is no region separate from us," he continues. "It is not only the very condition of our being but a continuous part of that being." The development of this expansive appreciation of environment, he notes, requires "an alert awareness, sensory acuteness, an understanding of the formative influences of the past that embraces present processes."²⁴ Thus, Berleant attributes to a rudimentary interpretive process

²³ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 23.

²⁴ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 131.

that occurs during the experience of aesthetic engagement the sense of continuity with environment that is the defining feature of aesthetic appreciation.

In the foregoing discussion, I have offered a summary explanation of the concept of engagement that defines Berleant's environmental aesthetic model. In an effort to convey an holistic understanding of engagement, I have interpreted the concept from the standpoint of multiple more specific principles that it subsumes. In accordance with the hermeneutic circle, my explanation of engagement has presumed the precedent understanding of artistic invention in association with Monadnock that I gained while interpreting the research that I conducted in the field. Thus, I have drawn particular attention to dimensions of engagement that align with the experience of my participants so that I might interpret from the standpoint of engagement the lived experience of my research participants.

Artistic Invention in Association with Monadnock from the Standpoint of Engagement

Reflection upon the lived experience of my research participants in conjunction with Berleant's aesthetic model reveals the substantial alignment of artistic invention in association with Monadnock and the concept of engagement. In accordance with engagement, lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock comprises the influence of established ways of knowing, the perceptual activity of the artist, and a sense of environmental continuity that follows from a circular process of interpretation. In what follows, I will explain the interaction of these dimensions of engagement in the lived experience of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. More specifically, I will observe that the artist's aesthetic appreciation of the mountain evolves gradually as the artist progresses through each of the five phases of artistic invention in association with Monadnock. In this gradual evolution, I will note

that the character of the artist's conscious aesthetic appreciation of the mountain develops from disinterested objectivity to holistic engagement.

First Encounter and Awareness of the Empirical Context of Aesthetic Appreciation

The first encounter with Monadnock that commences the process of artistic invention in association with the mountain consists of two experiential subphases: a favorable experience of focused appreciation and initial experiences of recreational activity. The first of these subphases prompts an understanding of Monadnock itself as the source of the aesthetic qualities that the artist appreciates in its presence. This understanding seems to follow from an established essentialist attribution of aesthetic qualities to the objects that these qualities describe. The second subphase of the first encounter challenges this essentialist aesthetic appreciation by prompting recognition of the extent to which environmental factors other than Monadnock itself condition the aesthetic values that appreciation of the mountain summons. This recognition follows from the perceptual activity that accompanies recreation in association with Monadnock. In accordance with aesthetic engagement, therefore, the first encounter presumes assimilated knowledge and involves perceptual activity; however, as a result of the persistent influence of the essentialism that it presumes, the first encounter falls short of prompting the holistic sense of continuity that defines aesthetic engagement.

The first encounter with Monadnock seems to presume an assimilated essentialist understanding of aesthetic appreciation that attributes to the mountain itself the aesthetic qualities that the artist appreciates in its presence. In participant descriptions of the first encounter, both the absence and the presence of particular experiential details convey the influence of this assimilated understanding. Absent from participant recollection of the moment of focused appreciation of Monadnock is the kind of reflexive awareness that characterizes

subsequent phases of artistic invention in association with the mountain. While all of my participants described the experiential context of their first encounter with Monadnock, none of them attributed to this context the nature of his or her aesthetic appreciation of the mountain. While this lack of contextual awareness might very well indicate a momentary disruption in my participants' imagination of the dualism of subjects and objects—a disruption that prompts a sense of the continuity that defines aesthetic engagement—any subsequent awareness of this momentary sense of continuity seems to have fallen to an assimilated understanding of aesthetic qualities as properties of aesthetic objects. For, all of my participants described their first appreciation of Monadnock as a more or less passive captivation with the aesthetic presentation of the mountain—a response to the stimulus of aesthetic properties that inhere in the mountain itself. For example, in the “delightful shock” of his first encounter with Monadnock, Ernest Hebert came to appreciate the mountain as “magnificent” and “immense.” In a similar manner, Mary Iselin came to appreciate Monadnock as “magnificent.” Further, Jill Fischman came to appreciate the “strength” and “majesty” of the mountain and to identify it as a “majestic mountain.” Finally, Jim Kates came to appreciate the “incredible beauty” of Monadnock. All of these statements attribute to Monadnock the aesthetic qualities that the artists came to appreciate in its presence. While the favorable experience of focused appreciation of Monadnock might disrupt momentarily the hegemony of subject-object dualism in the consciousness of the artist and thus prompt a temporary sense of continuity with the mountain, my participants' attribution of aesthetic qualities to Monadnock itself and their lack of any acknowledgement of the conditioning influence of experiential context upon aesthetic appreciation of the mountain suggest that the favorable experience of focused appreciation of Monadnock ultimately reinforces an assimilated understanding of aesthetic appreciation that is essentialist and dualistic.

Nonetheless, favorable experience of focused appreciation of Monadnock inspires the perceptual activity of initial experiences of recreational activity in association with Monadnock and thus initiates the gradual development of the artist's sense of engagement. All of the recreational activities involving Monadnock that my participants undertook soon after their moment of captivation with the mountain involved perceptual activity that prompted my participants to recognize the extent to which their aesthetic appreciation of the mountain hinges upon the empirical context of their lived experience. For example, after Jill first came to appreciate the "strength" and "majesty" of Monadnock, she began regularly to study the form of the mountain on the horizon and thus to acknowledge the extent to which the changing conditions of light and color influence the appreciation that the mountain seems to summon. "The light that you would see," she recalled, "the different colors, the tones of the mountain that would depict change and wonder and lust and drama, were just endless." In a similar manner, after Ernest first came to appreciate the magnificence and the immensity of Monadnock, he began to recognize the extent to which seasonal conditions determined the quality of his aesthetic appreciation of the mountain. He recalled one experience of viewing the mountain in early spring when "the snow [was] gone," in the valley around Monadnock and the weather was "starting to get really nice." At a road intersection that affords a view of Monadnock, "I look up" to see the mountain "covered with snow," he recalled, "and I got that feeling ... that something is in the back of your mind that comes up." Further, after Mary came to appreciate the magnificence of Monadnock, she began a practice of hiking regularly to the summit of the mountain and thus came to recognize that "the mountain's presence grows on you" and that "it starts revealing itself to you in layers." Finally, after Jim first came to appreciate the "Incredible beauty" of Monadnock, he commenced a quotidian practice of hiking on the mountain and swimming at its

base and thus came to appreciate the contingency of the mountain's appearance upon the vantage of the viewer and the changing conditions of weather and light. "Wherever you look at it from," he explained, the mountain is "going to look different and unique and have its own ... frame its landscape in its own way, or define its landscape in its own way." Thus, the favorable experience of focused appreciation of Monadnock motivates perceptual activity that discloses the contingency of aesthetic appreciation upon the empirical conditions of perception.

While a dualistic, essentialist appreciation of Monadnock commences the first encounter with the mountain, this appreciation motivates the kind of perceptual activity that characterizes engagement. This perceptual activity, in turn, inspires awareness of the extent to which features of the empirical world other than Monadnock inform the aesthetic appreciation that the mountain seems to summon. In the mind of the artist, therefore, experience of the first encounter gradually broadens the perceptual locus of aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock from the mountain itself to the empirical context of the lived experience in which the mountain is perceived. Thus, during the first encounter, the artist becomes aware of the contingency of aesthetic appreciation upon lived experience; however, this awareness falls short of a sense of continuity that defines engagement, as it attributes aesthetic appreciation entirely to the empirical context of perception and thus overlooks the conditioning influence of the artist's consciousness upon the aesthetic appreciation that the mountain seems to summon. Nonetheless, by prompting acknowledgement of the contextual influence of aesthetic appreciation, the first encounter initiates the experiential process that increases gradually the artist's awareness of the extent to which consciousness interacts with aesthetic appreciation.

Abstract Appreciation as a Medium Between Sensory Perception and Conscious Activity

During the phase of abstract appreciation, which follows the first encounter in the process of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, the artist comes to acknowledge a connection between aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock and various dimensions of conscious activity. More specifically, the focused and peripheral thoughts, impressions, emotions, and ideas vis-a-vis Monadnock that arise during the phase of abstract appreciation without intention and apart from any contemporaneous experience of viewing the mountain inspire an awareness of the potential for sensory perception of Monadnock to condition subsequent mental activity. Abstract appreciation, therefore, operates as a kind of experiential medium between the imagined outer and inner domains of the artist's experience and thus encourages the development of the artist's sense of engagement with Monadnock by prompting reflection upon the immaterial dimensions of aesthetic appreciation. Nonetheless, in opposition to the reciprocity of aesthetic engagement, abstract awareness addresses conscious activity only as a consequence of aesthetic appreciation and thus falls short of acknowledging the extent to which conscious activity conditions aesthetic appreciation in the first place.

On the one hand, abstract appreciation of Monadnock can enter the consciousness of the artist alongside other subjects of sensory and non-sensory awareness. For example, following their first encounters with Monadnock, Jim and Ernest both came to recognize the imagined presence of the mountain among the various thoughts, feelings, and impressions that summoned their attention. While driving in the region of southwestern New Hampshire, Jim came to acknowledge his persistent awareness of the presence of Monadnock—an awareness that presumed but outlasted a sensory experience of viewing the mountain. Thus, he came to identify Monadnock as “a part of my landscape, part of the aesthetic.” In a similar manner, following his experience of viewing Monadnock from the landfill in Keene, Ernest came to acknowledge his

appreciation of “the mountain in the abstract” and thus to recognize its presence among the other abstract dimensions of his conscious activity. Thus, abstract appreciation of Monadnock revealed to Jim and Ernest the potential for a sensory appreciation of the mountain to influence the content of subsequent mental activity.

On the other hand, abstract appreciation of Monadnock can come to occupy a more fundamental position in the consciousness of the artist. More than simply entering the mind of the artist alongside other thoughts, feelings, and impressions, abstract awareness of Monadnock can come to determine the mood that imbues the mental activity of the artist and thus to condition the artist’s appreciation of sensory and non-sensory stimuli. For example, after Jill first encountered Monadnock, she experienced in association with the mountain connected senses of freedom and creative inspiration that came to influence the other dimensions of her mental activity. Thus, the subjective response that thoughts of the mountain helped to inspire came to mediate her appreciation of other mental activity such that various sensory and non-sensory stimuli came to carry the freedom and creative inspiration that followed initially from her awareness of Monadnock. In a similar manner, Mary came to appreciate Monadnock as an “overarching presence” that emits an “energy” and a “feeling” and thus inspires creativity. This creativity, in turn, comes to disclose the other dimensions of her conscious activity such that the components of such activity all come to affirm the creativity that first came from perception of the mountain. Thus, abstract appreciation of Monadnock can come to constitute the mood that discloses to the artist the material and immaterial dimensions of experience.

In general, abstract appreciation prompts awareness of the ways in which sensory perception of the mountain conditions subsequent mental activity. While abstract appreciation thus inspires the artist to recognize the interaction of the outer and inner dimensions of his or her

experience of Monadnock, such appreciation falls short of prompting the sense of continuity that defines aesthetic engagement. In contrast to the bilateralism of environment and consciousness that characterizes the continuity of engagement, abstract appreciation acknowledges only a unilateral interaction of environment and consciousness. That is to say, abstract appreciation acknowledges the potential for sensory perception of Monadnock to condition conscious activity, but not for conscious activity, in turn, to condition the perception of Monadnock. By assigning agency to the mountain and overlooking the influence of the artist in the experience of aesthetic appreciation, abstract appreciation reinforces the essentialist dualism of the first encounter. Nonetheless, by prompting recognition of the involvement of mental activity in aesthetic appreciation, abstract appreciation constitutes an experiential foundation for the sense of aesthetic engagement with Monadnock that will develop in subsequent phases of artistic invention in association with the mountain.

Existential Understanding and the Beginning of Reciprocity

In opposition to the essentialist unilateralism that the first two phases of artistic invention in association with Monadnock presume and reinforce, existential understanding follows from deliberate interpretation that the artist undertakes for the purpose of explaining Monadnock's aesthetic appeal. This interpretation yields an appreciation of Monadnock in association with the existential concepts of permanence and impermanence. In accordance with the aesthetic qualities that the artist appreciates in association with Monadnock during the first encounter and abstract appreciation, these existential concepts come to present themselves to the artist as inherent properties of the mountain; however, unlike the aesthetic qualities that earlier phases of artistic invention in association with the mountain disclose—qualities that describe either the appearance of the mountain or the effect of the mountain's appearance upon the mind of the artist—

existential understanding merges sensory perception and cognitive reflection. More specifically, the permanence and impermanence of Monadnock that existential understanding discloses describe a cognitive response to sensory perception of the mountain that aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock comes to encompass. Thus, existential understanding initiates an awareness of the reciprocity of Monadnock and consciousness, and this awareness comes to underlie the sense of continuity that develops during the final phase of artistic invention in association with the mountain.

During the first two phases of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, the artist's aesthetic appreciation of the mountain reinforces the dualism of matter and consciousness that the artist presumes. This dualism prompts the artist to uphold a distinction between the features of sensory perception of the mountain and the mental activity that sensory perception seems to influence. Thus, during the first encounter with Monadnock, the artist's aesthetic appreciation focuses entirely upon the mountain and its empirical context. Hence, in the aforementioned manner of my participants, the artist comes to appreciate vis-a-vis Monadnock the qualities of magnificence, immensity, majesty, strength, and beauty, all of which the mountain discloses immediately and without substantial dependence upon the artist's cognitive activity. Abstract appreciation, on the other hand, focuses entirely upon the mental activity that follows sensory perception of the mountain. Hence, after their first encounters with the mountain, Jim came to conceive of Monadnock as "part of my landscape," Ernest came to appreciate "the mountain in the abstract," and Mary and Jill came to gain creative inspiration from their imagination of the mountain. All of these responses describe an experience that occurs apart from a contemporaneous sensory perception of the mountain. The common tendency of my participants to address separately their sensory perception of Monadnock and the ways in which

this perception influenced their mental activity suggests a persistent unawareness of both the conditioning influence of mental activity upon sensory perception or the concurrent reciprocity of mental activity and sensory perception in an experience of aesthetic appreciation.

In opposition to both of the first two stages of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, existential understanding prompts an awareness of the concurrent reciprocity of matter and consciousness in the experience of aesthetic appreciation. This awareness seems to follow from extended reflection upon experience of the first encounter and abstract appreciation and a consequent recognition of the ways in which sensory perception and consciousness each influence the other in an experience of aesthetic appreciation. Unlike appreciation of the visual grandeur of Monadnock that follows the first encounter and awareness of the responsive mental activity, both of which fall neatly within the respective categories of sensory perception and abstract appreciation, recognition of the permanence and impermanence of Monadnock accommodates interpretation from the standpoint of both experiential categories and thus blurs the supposed distinction between them. On the one hand, permanence and impermanence are concepts that gain association with Monadnock during experiences of viewing the mountain. The changes in nephology, light, color, and vantage that summon appreciation of both the impermanence of Monadnock's particular appearances and the permanence of the mountain itself are subjects of sensory perception. In a manner similar to earlier appreciation of the grandeur of Monadnock, therefore, they are qualities that the artist acknowledges while viewing the mountain. On the other hand, perception of the permanence and impermanence of Monadnock follows from recollection of past experiences of viewing the mountain. As perception of permanence seems to presume memory of viewing Monadnock in various conditions and recognizing its apparent immunity to forces that change the appearance of the

world around it, so perception of impermanence seems to follow from memory of various past appearances of Monadnock and a consequent recognition of the transience of each of these appearances. Therefore, perception of the permanence and impermanence of Monadnock follows from the concurrent reciprocity of sensory perception of the mountain and abstract recollection of the mountain's appearance in the past.

While existential understanding initiates the reciprocal experiential dynamics that characterize aesthetic engagement and thus gives rise to the increasing sense of interaction that defines the penultimate and ultimate phases of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, such understanding itself encompasses the artist's experience of only the mountain and thus falls short of the holism of aesthetic engagement. Berleant defines engagement as an experience of continuity between all of the features of an environment, including the totality of a perceiving subject. The holism of engagement, therefore, involves not only the sensory perception and the mental activity that pertain directly to appreciation of a given environment; engagement encompasses all of the features that constitute an individual human being. These include "knowledge," "beliefs," "opinions," "attitude," "memories," "associations" and "conditioning and habits of the body" all of which are informed by various components of a person's cultural background and by features that are particular to a person's lived experience. Existential understanding involves only sensory perception and mental activity that mediates the appearance of Monadnock and thus falls short of the holism of engagement; however, by prompting the simultaneous interaction of sensory perception and abstract appreciation, existential understanding gives rise to an existential sense of reciprocity with Monadnock that becomes increasingly holistic during the penultimate and ultimate phases of artistic invention in association with the mountain.

Sustained Attention and the Suspension of Critical Interpretation

Berleant observes that aesthetic engagement follows from close attention to the lived experiential interaction of aesthetic subjects and aesthetic environments. As we have noted, critical reflection upon aesthetic experiences tends to attribute the appeal of aesthetic environments to a singular locus—either the aesthetic subject or the aesthetic environment—and thus to inhibit awareness of the ways in which aesthetic subjects and environments each condition the other in the lived experience of aesthetic appreciation. The close attention to lived experience that gives way to aesthetic engagement, therefore, requires the temporary suspension of critical reflection and the cultivation of a descriptive approach to understanding experiences of aesthetic appreciation. This approach necessarily subordinates established ways of knowing to the lived experiential dynamics of aesthetic appreciation and ultimately prompts awareness of the continuity of aesthetic subjects and environments that defines aesthetic engagement. In the process of artistic invention in association with *Monadnock*, the artist suspends critical interpretation and thus cultivates this descriptive approach to understanding aesthetic experience during the phase of sustained attention. In this penultimate phase, the work of giving faithful artistic expression to an aesthetic appreciation of *Monadnock* prompts the artist to distinguish stimuli that are inherent from stimuli that are extraneous to the aesthetic appreciation of interest and thus to confine attention to the lived experiential dynamics of a particular aesthetic appreciation.

Berleant identifies this prioritization of lived experience over established concepts as a precondition for awareness of the continuity between aesthetic subjects and objects that defines aesthetic engagement. In reference to the process of discerning meaning in experiences of aesthetic appreciation, he argues that “The essential problem here is to keep the meanings true to

the directness of sensory awareness and not to edit that awareness to fit our customary meanings.”²⁵ As I noted above, the tendency that Berleant discourages here—the tendency to subordinate aesthetic appreciation to customary meanings—reinforces an assimilated essentialism that diverts attention from the myriad ways in which aesthetic subjects condition appearances of Monadnock and thus precludes awareness of the reciprocity of aesthetic appreciation. On the other hand, close attention to the lived experience of aesthetic appreciation has the potential to disclose the continuity between the dimensions of an aesthetic subject’s abstract understanding and the form of Monadnock that the aesthetic subject appreciates. The work of devoting primary attention to lived experience of aesthetic appreciation, he argues, enables a person “to take the world fully, to employ the entire range of perception,” and thus to cultivate “an expanded but discriminating awareness as part of a totally engaged organic, social life.”²⁶ Thus, Berleant identifies as a medium of the sense of aesthetic engagement the effort to suspend critical interpretation and thus to attend closely to the dynamics of lived aesthetic experience.

In the process of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, artists undertake this effort naturally as they work to give artistic expression to an appreciation of Monadnock. In the experience of my participants, suspension of critical interpretation during the phase of sustained attention arises either from the challenge of capturing a transient, present appreciation of Monadnock or from the work of reconstructing the experiential dimensions of a past appreciation

²⁵ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 23.

²⁶ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 24.

of Monadnock. On the one hand, the challenge of depicting a temporary present appreciation of the mountain requires Mary and Jill to resist the urge critically to assess their perception of Monadnock, the painting that they are in the midst of completing, and themselves in the process of painting. As both artists explained, critical interpretation of any one of these experiential dimensions distracts attention from the temporary appreciation of Monadnock that comprises all of them and thus prohibits faithful artistic expression of that appreciation before the circumstances that gave rise to it begin to change. Conversely, the work of reconstructing the experiential dimensions of a past appreciation of Monadnock requires Jim and Ernest to resist the influence of extraneous sensory or abstract stimuli in the present. Among the present abstract stimuli from which both writers divert attention is any critical interpretation that might subordinate a remembered aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock to the parameters of an established explanatory concept. By resisting the urge to explain past appreciations of Monadnock, Jim and Ernest sustain attention to the interaction of the lived experiential dimensions that constitute a remembered appreciation of the mountain. As in Mary and Jill's process of painting, this suspension of critical interpretation in Jim and Ernest's process of writing enables the faithful expression of lived aesthetic experience of Monadnock.

More fundamentally, the suspension of critical interpretation that occurs in the phase of sustained attention transforms the hermeneutic from which artists understand the Monadnock appreciations that they seek to convey. Rather than subordinating their appreciation of Monadnock to a supposition of the mountain's inherent magnificence, majesty, beauty, and strength—established, essentialist concepts that artists used to explain their first encounters with the mountain—artists adopt a descriptive hermeneutic that prompts their awareness of the interaction of the empirical and abstract experiential dimensions that constitute their aesthetic

appreciation of Monadnock. As Berleant observes, such a descriptive aesthetics gives rise to the sense of continuity that defines aesthetic engagement. In accordance with Berleant's observation, the suspension of critical interpretation that occurs as artists sustain attention to an appreciation of Monadnock ultimately prompts the sense of continuity with the mountain that their artistic compositions express.

Continuity and the Discovery of Aesthetic Engagement

In accordance with the experience of engagement that it defines, continuity is an ontological condition that operates without dependence upon the workings of conscious awareness. That is to say, one need not know that one is undergoing an experience of continuity in order for such an experience to occur. Indeed, the popularity of essentialist understandings of aesthetic appreciation during the early phases of artistic invention in association with Monadnock attests that continuity rarely becomes subject to conscious awareness in the experience of aesthetic appreciation. Nonetheless, Berleant acknowledges that extraordinary experiences can stimulate a person's awareness of the continuity that defines one's lived aesthetic experience. These experiences are "rare," he argues, and they "impress us by their vividness and force."²⁷ They include moments of mysticism, religious devotion, passion, love, and appreciation of art and nature.²⁸ Although this list of experiences includes no reference to artistic invention in association with place, my research indicates that such experience has the potential to inspire awareness of the continuity that defines aesthetic engagement. As a

²⁷ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 110.

²⁸ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 110.

consequence of suspending critical interpretation and sustaining attention to the experiential dynamics of an aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock during the process of artistic composition, the artist comes to acknowledge and to give artistic expression to the reciprocal manner in which abstract experience and physical geography each constitute the other in the experience of aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock.

On the one hand, the artist who renders an appearance of Monadnock discovers upon completing their work the conditioning influence of abstract experiential dimensions upon the appearance of interest. For example, Mary's effort while painting Monadnock plein air to resist the temptation to interpret critically the circumstances of her life, the view of the mountain before her, and the quality of the image that she is creating allows her to sustain attention to the immediate experience of viewing the mountain and thereafter to recognize the extent to which her view of Monadnock incorporates the geography of the mountain and the complex of personal experience that constitutes her perspective. Mary has come to acknowledge the conditioning influence of her personal experience upon her appreciation and her paintings of Monadnock in particular while painting the mountain alongside other artists. "I'm painting right next to [another artist]," she recalled "and we're both working realistically." That is to say, Mary and her companion that day both worked to depict precisely the common view of the mountain before them. Mary went on to explain that she and her companion both felt confident at the end of their plein air session that their own paintings depicted realistically the view of Monadnock that they shared that day, and yet, their paintings had little in common. "So even though the mountain is revealing itself to us in its nuances," she recalled, "because it's coming through my hand or his hand, it's all different." Thus, Mary came to recognize the unique personal experiential basis of each artist's view of Monadnock. Based upon this recognition, she identified Monadnock as "a

mirror for the viewer” and observed that the mountain “mirrors our emotions.” This observation hinged upon the temporary suspension of established concepts that might otherwise attribute the appearance of Monadnock exclusively to the geography of the mountain and its environs. Thus, the completion of an artistic composition of Monadnock discloses to the artist the continuity of geography and personal experience that constitutes aesthetic appreciation.

On the other hand, the artist who seeks to express abstract experiential dimensions that have gained association with Monadnock discovers during the phase of sustained attention the conditioning influence of the geography of Monadnock upon the impressions of interest. For example, after Jill underwent the cathartic experience of painting a series of self-portraits in the presence of Monadnock, she came to discover the form of Monadnock in her understanding of the experiential qualities that she gained while painting her portraits. This discovery occurred in the process of completing a painting at a fundraising event in the Jaffrey Civic Center years after she completed her series of self-portraits. Jill knew that her ability to conceive and complete a painting in public within the hour that she was allotted hinged upon her ability to harness the senses of strength and freedom that she had experienced years earlier while painting her self-portraits in the presence of Monadnock, so she sustained attention to these experiential dimensions throughout the process of completing the painting. At the end of the hour, she came to recognize a close resemblance between the abstract form that she painted and the shape of Monadnock. Based upon this resemblance, she came to acknowledge that her understanding of the senses of strength and freedom that she gained in the presence of Monadnock had come to subsume the geography of the mountain such that her effort to harness these senses prompted her to render a likeness of Monadnock. Thus, upon completion of her painting in the Jaffrey Civic

Center, Jill came to recognize the continuity of geography and emotional experience that constitutes her aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock.

In a similar manner, after sustaining attention to a past experience of hiking Monadnock, Jim came to acknowledge the continuity of the geography of the mountain and the emotions that he felt while ascending and descending it. This continuity gained artistic expression in “Places of Permanent Shade”—a poem that describes the failure of a courtship on Monadnock.²⁹ Although the poem addresses primarily the experience of two hikers who come to acknowledge their romantic incompatibility, the poem conveys the details of this experience in geographical terms so that descriptions of the terrain of Monadnock double as accounts of the status of the protagonists’ courtship. Throughout the poem, sunlight and ascent convey figuratively the protagonists’ progress toward an anticipated romantic connection and darkness and descent convey figuratively the failure of the protagonists’ courtship. Thus, the opening lines of the poem read “Through the long light of afternoon / we go on descending. / We never made it to the top,” which the speaker describes as “rock gray and naked as the late November day.”³⁰ The purpose of these lines at once to plot the course of a hike on Monadnock and to convey the status of a courtship becomes apparent in the second stanza, which explains the experiential context of the protagonists’ presence on Monadnock. The stanza opens with the statement “We had come thinking we might fall in love” and concludes with the acknowledgement “now it will not be so.”³¹ This experiential context imbues with sexual and emotional meaning the speaker’s

²⁹ J. Kates, *Places of Permanent Shade*, 75.

³⁰ J. Kates, *Places of Permanent Shade*, 75.

³¹ J. Kates, *Places of Permanent Shade*, 75

perception of the summit in the first stanza. The nakedness of the summit's appearance implies both the nudity of sexual intimacy and the honest disclosure of emotional attraction toward which the protagonists believed they were progressing as they ascended Monadnock. In a similar manner, the grayness that the speaker addresses in the first stanza seems to convey both literal and figurative meanings, describing at once the color of the speaker's environs and the increasing dejection of the speaker's mood. The appearance of Monadnock as naked and gray in the poem's first stanza, therefore, conveys the protagonists' increasing lack of interest in a romantic connection with each other and thus prefigures the failed courtship that the speaker announces directly at the end of the second stanza. Having established in the first two stanzas the literal and figurative meaning of the poem's geographical descriptions, the speaker offers in the poem's third and final stanza a geographical explanation of the failure of the courtship that the first two stanzas introduce: "We dawdled too long at the scant timberline / and will have to work our last way in the dusk."³² These lines convey at once a literal explanation of the protagonists' failed effort to reach the summit and a figurative explanation of their failed courtship. As hesitation to proceed above the treeline left the protagonists without enough daylight to hike to the summit, so reluctance to ascend to the pinnacle of their courtship revealed a shared sense of doubt that negated the possibility of an authentic romantic relationship. In contrast to the nakedness that the experience of ascending and courting discloses to the speaker, the experience of descending and accepting a failed courtship discloses geographical features that shroud the

³² J. Kates, *Places of Permanent Shade*, 75.

vulnerable from the harm of natural forces. In these “places of permanent shade / snow lingers from last week’s light fall / like animals that can only freeze for defense, / immobile and vulnerable under our eyes.”³³ In accordance with the geographical descriptions of the first and second stanzas, these concluding lines convey a meaning that is at once literal and figurative. From a literal standpoint, these “places of permanent shade” are refugia that protect natural entities from the harm of the world they inhabit. From a figurative standpoint, these refugia appeal to the speaker as settings that might offer solace from the discomfort of failed courtship. Or, perhaps they appeal as places in which the lingering hope of love might yet be fulfilled temporarily in spite of a natural incompatibility, which will eventually render the protagonists “immobile and vulnerable.” In either case, these lines and the whole of the poem that they conclude convey the continuity of abstract experiential dimensions and the geography of Monadnock. Awareness of this continuity follows from a period of sustained attention in which Jim suspended the influence of established explanations of romantic love, attended closely to his lived experience, and thus discovered the geography of Monadnock conditioned his experience of failed courtship on the mountain.

While Jill and Jim both recounted experiences of sustaining attention to particular abstract experiential dimensions that were associated with Monadnock, Ernest discussed more generally the ways in which sustained attention to a literary subject discloses experiential connections between those subjects and other features of the world that comprises them. To explain the process by which he discovers these connections, Ernest described a hypothetical

³³ J. Kates, *Places of Permanent Shade*, 75.

situation. “I find that if somebody says, ‘Ernie, I want you to write about Monadnock,’ ... I almost can’t do it,” he explained. “I have to be writing about something else and all of a sudden ... the subconscious [reveals] this authentic connection [between that other subject and Monadnock], but it’s totally inferential; it’s not something that you went after.” He proceeded to explain how the experience of discovering such connections has conditioned his appreciation of literary symbols. “My feeling is that symbols should emerge from a narrative” rather than from a preconceived literary plan, he explained. “When they emerge, they become ... beautiful. It’s like the gods coming down off the mountain.” By sustaining attention to subjects of interest and thus suspending the influence of preconceived appreciations of those subjects and their associations with other phenomena, Ernest discovers the continuity of the abstract and material dimensions of the worlds that his novels address. These worlds and the connections between phenomena that they comprise accord closely with Ernest’s personal experience. Thus, the process of sustained attention discloses to Ernest the complex ways in which the abstract and the material dimensions of his experience condition each other.

Ultimately, artistic invention in association with Monadnock prompts conscious awareness of aesthetic engagement—the ontological condition of environmental aesthetic appreciation. As a consequence of suspending critical interpretation and sustaining attention to the experiential dynamics of an aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock during the process of artistic composition, the artist gains awareness of the continuity of consciousness and geography that constitutes an aesthetic appreciation of the mountain. On the one hand, artists who seek to give expression to an immediate sensory appreciation of Monadnock come to discover the influence of abstract experiential dimensions upon their view of the mountain. On the other hand, artists who seek to give artistic expression to abstract dimensions of experience that have gained

association with Monadnock come to discover the influence of the geography of the mountain upon the experiential dimensions that are their subject. The breadth of the experience that this conscious awareness of continuity encompasses increases gradually over the course of an artist's artistic invention in association with Monadnock. Thus, the more that artists attend to aesthetic appreciations of Monadnock, the more of themselves they come to recognize in their aesthetic appreciation of the mountain. Ultimately, therefore, artistic invention in association with Monadnock has the potential to undermine the distinctions that the artist imagines between inner and outer dimensions of experience and to prompt recognition of the experiential unity of environmental aesthetic appreciation.

Conclusion

Interpretation of artistic invention in association with Monadnock from the standpoint of Berleant's concept of engagement has disclosed the gradual evolution of the artist's conscious aesthetic appreciation during the process of composing artistic representations of either the mountain itself or some dimension of experience that has gained association with the mountain. More specifically, such interpretation has revealed in the artist's conscious awareness the gradual waning of an assimilated essentialist understanding and the gradual waxing of an interactive understanding of Monadnock's aesthetic appeal. In this process of evolution, each of the five phases that constitute artistic invention in association with Monadnock increases gradually the artist's recognition of the continuity that defines Berleant's concept of aesthetic engagement. While the first encounter reinforces an assimilated essentialist understanding of aesthetic appreciation, it also stimulates aesthetic interest in Monadnock and thus initiates the process of artistic invention in association with the mountain. Abstract appreciation, in turn, prompts recognition of the way in which a sensory appreciation of Monadnock influences subsequent

mental activity and therefore operates as a vehicle between the imagined inner and outer dimensions of aesthetic appreciation. Existential understanding stimulates awareness of the reciprocity of aesthetic appreciation by merging sensory perception and cognitive reflection. Sustained attention, in turn, involves the suspension of critical interpretation and thus inhibits the influence of the established concepts that encourage an essentialist understanding of aesthetic appreciation. Finally, continuity discloses the reciprocity of physical geography and abstract experience in the lived aesthetic experience of the artist and thus prompts the artist's awareness of aesthetic engagement.

Engagement from the Standpoint of Artistic Invention in Association with Monadnock

As interpretation of artistic invention in association with Monadnock from the standpoint of Berleant's concept of engagement discloses phases of lived aesthetic experience that assimilated knowledge tends to conceal, so interpretation of Berleant's concept of engagement from the standpoint of artistic invention in association with Monadnock reveals dimensions of the concept of engagement that theoretical reflection tends to neglect. In particular, artistic invention in association with Monadnock both discloses and resolves multiple points of tension between the interconnected descriptive and prescriptive aspects of Berleant's account of engagement. More specifically, artistic invention in association with Monadnock underscores in lived experience the paradoxical manner in which the descriptive dimensions tend to inhibit the prescriptive dimensions of engagement and exemplifies an experiential process that enables firsthand conscious awareness of engagement by suspending temporarily the descriptive dimensions of engagement that inhibit such awareness.

On the one hand, artistic invention in association with Monadnock illumines the tension that I discussed in Chapter II between the descriptive and the prescriptive dimensions of

Berleant's concept of engagement. In particular, the sense of separation from Monadnock that defined my participants' first encounter with the mountain attests to the continuity of aesthetic appreciation and dualistic established ways of knowing and thus to the tendency of these ways of knowing to inhibit conscious awareness of the continuity between percipient and environment that Berleant prescribes. Artistic invention in association with Monadnock, therefore, expresses in the lived experience of artists a conceptual tension in Berleant's aesthetic model.

On the other hand, artistic invention in association with Monadnock attests to the possibility of resolving this tension by diminishing the influence of assimilated knowledge upon conscious awareness. All of the experiential phases of artistic invention in association with Monadnock challenge more or less forcefully the hegemony of assimilated knowledge in the constitution of aesthetic experience. The first encounter challenges a presumed distinction between Monadnock and its environment by disclosing the continuity of the mountain's aesthetic appeal and features of the surrounding environment. Abstract appreciation, in turn, erodes the imagined distinction between the material and immaterial dimensions of aesthetic appreciation by revealing a unilateral continuity between the outer domain of sensory experience and the inner domain of mental activity. Further, existential understanding undermines an assimilated distinction between aesthetic subjects and objects by illuminating the reciprocal continuity of Monadnock perceptions and the cognitive activity of the artist. None of these phases, however, weakens the influence of assimilated knowledge upon aesthetic appreciation more forcefully than sustained attention. During this penultimate phase of artistic invention in association with Monadnock, the work of artistic composition requires the artist temporarily to suspend the influence of assimilated critical hermeneutics that isolate each from all others the various dimensions of aesthetic experience. This temporary suspension allows artists to attend all but

exclusively to the lived experiential dynamics of their aesthetic appreciation and ultimately to gain conscious awareness of the continuity that defines their aesthetic experience. Therefore, artistic invention in association with Monadnock has the potential gradually to diminish the influence of assimilated knowledge over conscious aesthetic awareness and thus to resolve the tension between the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of Berleant's concept of engagement.

Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion, I have undertaken the hermeneutic circular process of interpreting artistic invention in association with Monadnock in conjunction with a compatible concept in the field of environmental aesthetics. After initially expanding the scope of my interpretation to encompass the cognitive and the non-conceptual branches of this field, I established the compatibility of my research with the non-conceptual branch of environmental aesthetics in general and with Berleant's non-conceptual environmental aesthetics of engagement in particular. Based upon this compatibility, I undertook a hermeneutic circular interpretation of artistic invention in association with Monadnock and Berleant's concept of engagement. On the one hand, my interpretation of artistic invention in association with Monadnock from the standpoint of engagement disclosed the gradual manner in which conscious awareness of engagement develops as the artist passes through each of the five experiential phases of artistic invention. On the other hand, my interpretation of engagement from the standpoint of artistic invention in association with Monadnock revealed a tension between the ontological and the aspirational dimensions of engagement and demonstrated the potential for artistic invention in association with Monadnock to resolve this tension by prompting conscious awareness of engagement. In the next chapter, I will discuss the broader conceptual implications that follow

from this reciprocal disclosure of artistic invention in association with Monadnock and Berleant's concept of engagement.

CHAPTER VI: ARTISTIC INVENTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH MONADNOCK AND THE PURSUIT OF AN ECOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY

Introduction

In this final chapter, I will discuss the implications of the consonance that I have established between artistic invention in association with Monadnock and Berleant's concept of engagement for discussions of the human cultural origins of contemporary ecological crisis. Based upon both the experiential process that my research on artistic invention in association with Monadnock revealed and the continuity of aesthetic experience and ontology in Berleant's aesthetics of engagement, I will discuss the complementarity of artistic invention in association with place and intellectual efforts to encourage an ecological ontology. More specifically, I will argue that artistic invention in association with place prompts lived experience of the holistic sense of being that intellectual ecological ontologies paradoxically both promote and inhibit and that intellectual ecological ontologies, in turn, encourage acknowledgement of both the continuity that follows from artistic invention and the significance of this continuity to contemporary efforts to remediate the harm that ontological division inflicts upon humans and the environment alike. Ultimately, I will identify artistic invention in association with place as a means of gaining lived experience of the holistic sense of being that combating contemporary ecological crisis seems to require.

The Challenge and the Possibility of Implementing Ecological Ontology

As I discussed in Chapter II, intellectual efforts to promote ecological ontology, in a paradoxical manner, both encourage and inhibit development of the unified understanding of being that they describe. On the one hand, such efforts draw necessary attention to the harm that ontological division inflicts upon humans and the environment and they promote a unified understanding of being that fosters awareness of the reciprocal contingency of human and

environmental welfare. Thus, intellectual ecological ontologies encourage their audience to think in more sustainable ways. On the other hand, the intellectual medium of these ontologies reinforces a belief in the primacy of the intellect that follows from the ontological division that these ontologies oppose. Of themselves, therefore, intellectual efforts to promote ecological ontology subtly reinforce the problem of ontological division and thus undermine the possibility of realizing the ecological ways of being in the world that they imagine.

As a consequence of these limitations, the possibility of implementing ecological ontology—of actually coming to be in the holistic way that intellectual ecological ontologies describe—requires recourse to some sort of practical means of subverting, if only temporarily, the supposed primacy of the intellect and the ontological division that this supposition presumes.

The consonance that I have established between artistic invention in association with Monadnock and Berleant's concept of engagement indicates the potential for artistic invention in association with place to serve as one such practical means of implementing ecological ontology. This potential follows from the continuity in Berleant's aesthetics of engagement of aesthetic experience and ontology and from the revelatory potential that this continuity invests in aesthetic experience.

The Continuity of Aesthetic Experience and Ontology in Berleant's Aesthetics of Engagement

According to Berleant's aesthetics of engagement, there is continuity between such aesthetic experience and ontology. More specifically, Berleant addresses aesthetic experience as an expression of being in the world, and he addresses the nature of being in the world, in turn, as the foundation of aesthetic experience. According to Berleant, therefore, the continuity that defines aesthetic engagement also defines the ontology that aesthetic engagement presumes.

In accordance with the ontological basis of aesthetic experience that he supposes, Berleant constructs his aesthetics of engagement upon interactive ontological principles that he discusses regularly in all of his major works on aesthetic engagement. “We are ... continuous with environment,” he proposes.¹ “Environment is no region separate from us. It is not only the very condition of our being but a continuous part of that being.”² On account of the ontological unity of humans and environment, he argues that “Continuities, not separations, mark the human-environment complex. And these continuities are so fundamental that neither component can be thought of apart from the other.”³ Thus, he concludes that “There is reciprocity, an intimate engagement with the conditions of life that joins person with place in a bond that is not only mutually complementary but genuinely unified.”⁴ According to Berleant, therefore, aesthetic engagement is as it is because it both presumes and expresses the nature of being in the world.

The Revelatory Potential of Aesthetic Experience

On account of this supposed continuity between aesthetics and ontology, Berleant attributes to experiences of aesthetic appreciation a powerful revelatory potential. Beyond simply disclosing the nature of our interaction with a particular aesthetic environment, aesthetic experiences, argues Berleant, have the potential to reveal to us the fundamental nature of our being in the world. Berleant observes generally that “Environmental aesthetics, as theory and as

¹ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 12, 131.

² Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 131.

³ Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 161.

⁴ Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 89.

experience, can help us achieve a truer sense of the human condition.”⁵ More specifically, he argues that “Out of these perceptual encounters [that constitute aesthetic experience] emerges a rich understanding of interconnectedness; no, more than this, a living sense of the actual continuities that bind my conscious body to the places I inhabit, even if briefly.”⁶ According to Berleant’s aesthetic model, therefore, aesthetic appreciation manifests the reality of being in the world and thus affords momentary lived experience of the holistic unity that defines both the human condition and the environment that humanity helps to constitute.

The revelatory potential of aesthetic appreciation, however, hinges upon the percipient’s conscious awareness of continuity with environment. As my research and Berleant’s aesthetic model both indicate, such conscious awareness rarely accompanies experiences of aesthetic appreciation. According to Berleant, the continuity of aesthetic experience and dualistic established ways of knowing inhibits conscious awareness of the continuity between percipient and environment that defines aesthetic experience. According to my research on artistic invention in association with *Monadnock*, the first subphase of the first encounter reinforces an assimilated essentialism that isolates the being of the percipient from the experience of aesthetic appreciation. Thus, the revelatory potential of aesthetic appreciation hinges upon the possibility of limiting the influence of dualistic established ways of knowing and thus gaining conscious awareness of continuity with environment.

⁵ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, xiii.

⁶ Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 28.

Artistic Invention in Association with Place as a Medium for Lived Ecological Ontological Experience

The research that I have conducted on artistic invention in association with Monadnock has revealed a gradual experiential process in which the character of the artist's conscious appreciation of Monadnock evolves from a disinterested sense of separation from the mountain to an holistic sense of continuity with the mountain. Based upon my observation of this experiential process, I have drawn a conclusion about the aesthetic experience of artists who undertake artistic invention in association with place: I have argued that such artistic invention inspires conscious awareness of aesthetic engagement by suspending temporarily the dualism of established ways of knowing. While this conclusion pertains principally to the domain of environmental aesthetics, its implications extend to the more fundamental domain of ontology. The potential that my research demonstrates for artistic invention in association with place to prompt aesthetic experience of continuity with environment coupled with the consistency of aesthetic experience and ontology in Berleant's aesthetic model indicates the possibility for artistic invention in association with place to stimulate momentarily the holistic sense of being in the world that ecological ontologies encourage and thus to serve as a practical experiential measure for implementing ecological ontology.

My participants' accounts of artistic invention in association with Monadnock disclose an experiential process that comprises five phases—first encounter, abstract appreciation, existential understanding, sustained attention, and continuity—each of which, in its own way, undermines the dualism of established ways of appreciating the mountain and helps to inspire the conscious sense of engagement that the experiential process ultimately produces. The first encounter with Monadnock consists of two subphases: a favorable experience of focused appreciation that

reinforces established modes of aesthetic appreciation and initial experiences of recreational activity that challenge these established modes. During the first of these subphases, the artist's appreciation of Monadnock presumes and reinforces a dualistic essentialism that overlooks the extent to which artists' lived experiential context informs their aesthetic appreciation of the mountain and attributes this appreciation entirely to aesthetic qualities that supposedly inhere in the mountain itself. The second of these subphases, however, challenges this dualistic essentialism by prompting recognition of the extent to which environmental factors other than Monadnock itself condition the aesthetic values that appreciation of the mountain summons. During the phase of abstract understanding, artists acknowledge the influence of a past sensory appreciation of the mountain upon subsequent mental activity, and thus they begin to recognize the interaction of the material and the immaterial dimensions of their aesthetic appreciation. This recognition deepens during the phase of existential understanding, when the artist comes to appreciate Monadnock in association with the existential categories of permanence and impermanence and thus gains awareness of the concurrent reciprocity of matter and consciousness in the experience of aesthetic appreciation. During the penultimate phase of sustained attention, the work of giving faithful artistic expression to an aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock prompts artists to suspend critical interpretation of their aesthetic experience and to attend to the dynamics of the experience itself. In the final phase of continuity, this sustained attention inspires a conscious sense of engagement with Monadnock in which artists come to acknowledge the interaction of abstract experience and physical geography in the experience of aesthetic appreciation of Monadnock. Thus, my research indicates the potential for artistic invention in association with place gradually to prompt conscious awareness of the continuity that defines lived experience of aesthetic appreciation.

Artistic invention in association with place and intellectual efforts to promote an ecological understanding of being are, therefore, mutually complementary. On the one hand, artistic invention in association with place complements intellectual ecological ontologies by requiring temporary suspension of the dualistic established ways of knowing that ecological ontologies paradoxically oppose and reinforce and by thus stimulating lived experience of the ways of being in the world that ecological ontologies promote. On the other hand, intellectual efforts to promote an ecological understanding of being complement artistic invention in association with place by subordinating the experience of continuity to the parameters of rational explanation and by thus prompting acknowledgement of both the experience itself and the significance of the experience to the work of attending to contemporary ecological crisis and the harm that it inflicts upon humanity and the environment. The mutual complementarity of artistic invention in association with place and intellectual ecological ontologies overall indicates the benefit that might come from pursuing each in conjunction with the other.

Implications

The contemporary persistence of ecological crisis and the increasing severity of the harm that it inflicts upon humanity and the environment demand urgent, practical efforts to undermine the hegemony of ontological division and to implement ecological ontological ideals. These efforts must acknowledge the complex ways in which Modern political and economic systems perpetuate such division and must bridge the widening gulf between the anthropocentrism of these Modern systems and the posthumanism of contemporary ecological ontologies. My research on artistic engagement with *Monadnock* indicates the possibility for artistic invention in association with place to serve as a strategy for gaining and promoting conscious awareness of the ecology of being and for establishing a higher degree of consonance between lived

experience and ecological ontological ideals. This consonance, in turn, has the potential to motivate revision of the systems that perpetuate ontological division and to prompt further investigation of the practical ecological ontological potential of a greater variety of artistic media in association with a greater diversity of places.

Contemporary work in the field of ecological ontology has drawn helpful attention to the systemic basis of ontological division. Whereas earlier work in the field identified intellectual presuppositions as the origin of ontological division, contemporary ecological ontologies attribute such division to Modern political and economic systems and to the divisive perspectives that complement these systems. Thus, contemporary authors identify capitalism and colonialism and the individualism that these systems perpetuate as sources of contemporary ontological division, and they propose various understandings of interspecies entanglement in the interest of undermining the influence of these systems upon contemporary ontological thought.

By broadening scholarly discussion of the origin of ontological division beyond the domain of the intellect and by revealing the complex ways in which the systems that govern contemporary life perpetuate divisive perspectives, contemporary ecological ontologies illumine the pervasion of ontological division in the systems that govern life in the contemporary world. Thus, these ecological ontologies have demonstrated that the work of undermining ontological division and of coming to know ourselves as beings who are of the material world that we inhabit requires change that is more comprehensive than the intellectual revision proposed in earlier ecological ontologies. Indeed, no effort to revise ontological understanding has the potential to undermine ontological division and its harmful consequences apart from an attendant effort to transform the systems that prompt us to know and to experience ourselves as beings apart from the world that we inhabit.

On account of the persistence of these systems, on the one hand, and the posthumanism of contemporary ecological ontologies, on the other, the gulf between lived human experience and current ecological ontological ideals is wider now than it ever has been. While capitalism and colonialism continue to fore-structure lived experience of a sharp existential distinction between humanity and the rest of the material world, contemporary ecological ontologies have moved beyond the relatively human-centered, phenomenological interests of earlier ecological ontologies and have come to challenge the boundaries between species that these earlier ecological ontologies presume. Rather than promoting awareness of the lived human experiential continuity with environment, therefore, contemporary ecological ontologies promote awareness of the complex, biological interactions between species that constitute life in all of its forms. On account of the increasing contradiction between the divisive, anthropocentric systems that govern life in the world and current, posthuman ecological ontological ways of thinking, the possibility of conscious lived experience of the ecological sense of being that accords with the ideals of contemporary ecological ontologies seems increasingly unattainable.

The consequent persistence of a contradiction between lived human experience and current ecological ontological thought inhibits the possibility of challenging the hegemony of ontological division and thus perpetuates the ecological crisis that follows from such division. Unabated, this crisis will continue to inflict harm upon human beings and the world that we inhabit. On the one hand, ontological division harms humanity by isolating us from the multitude of species that constitute our empirical habitat and confining us within a world of our own making. The narrow parameters of this exclusively human world deprive us of recourse to the full range of existential possibilities that our worldly belonging affords us and prompts within us a sense of alienation from the places that we inhabit and the very matter of which we are formed.

On the other hand, ontological division harms the non-human world by inhibiting human attention and sensitivity to the catastrophic effects of our contemporary ways of being upon the diversity of species with whom we share our world and upon the world at large. As the rate of global climate change and the severity of its consequences increase, so too does the toll of these consequences upon human populations. Thus, the destruction of ongoing ecological crisis will instill ever more forcefully an awareness of the embeddedness of human being in the material world. If this awareness can develop by means other than such destruction, however, it has the potential to motivate effective revision of human cultural systems that degrade the quality of human experience and the welfare of the non-human world and to prompt opposition to the ontological division that these systems perpetuate.

The widening gulf between contemporary ecological ontologies and the dualistic systems that fore-structure lived human experience, on the one hand, and the increasing rate and severity of global climate change, on the other, demand urgent, practical efforts to establish consonance between lived human experience and contemporary ecological ontological ideals. Such consonance hinges upon the possibility of gaining and promoting conscious lived experience of human existential continuity with the material world. Efforts to gain and promote such experience must bridge the anthropocentrism of the political and economic systems that fore-structure lived human experience and the posthumanism of contemporary ecological ontologies. These efforts must meet us within the anthropocentric Modern systems that divide us from the rest of the world, and they must lead us progressively toward a lived, ecocentric awareness of the entanglement that defines being in the world. Only by pursuing such conscious experiential awareness of the ecology of our being can we hope to embody ecological ontological principles that might otherwise remain ontologically divisive intellectual

abstractions, to challenge the hegemony of ontological division, and to discover in our own particular ways the interspecies entanglements that constitute us and the world that we inhabit.

The research that I have conducted on artistic engagement with Monadnock indicates the possibility for artistic invention in association with places in general to serve as one of such practical means of working toward the implementation of contemporary ecological ontological ideals. This possibility arises from both the anthropocentrism of the early stages of the artistic process and the sense of continuity with place that this process ultimately produces. In accordance with the ontological division that Modern political and economic systems fore-structure in contemporary lived experience, the process of artistic invention begins with a sense of separation from place. As the process progresses, however, this sense of separation gives way gradually to the sense of continuity with place that ecological ontologies promote. Thus, the work of artistic invention bridges the ontological division that Modern systems perpetuate and the basic continuity with environment that underlies contemporary ecological ontological accounts of interspecies entanglement.

If artistic engagement with place can establish a higher degree of consonance between the lived experience of the artist and the ideals of contemporary ecological ontologies, then artistic engagement with place might serve as a useful medium in contemporary efforts to combat ecological crisis and its harmful consequences. The process of creating art in association with place can undermine in the experience of the artist the ontological division that isolates humanity from the material world and can thus prompt a sense of belonging within the places in association with which art is created. This process can also prompt the artists' attention and sensitivity to the places in association with which they create art and inspire efforts to promote the welfare of these places and the species that form them. The experience of continuity with

place that artistic invention can inspire might ultimately prompt efforts to revise the Modern systems that perpetuate ontological division such that these systems come to fore-structure lived human experience of belonging within the material world.

If artistic invention in association with place can prompt an ecological sense of belonging that might motivate revision of ontologically divisive Modern systems, then such artistic invention has the potential to be an effective tool in ongoing practical efforts to combat ecological crisis and its harmful consequences. Based upon this potential, educators might do well to implement in the curricula of various disciplines the practice of artistic invention in association with place. Assignments that invite students to create such art might complement curricula in the environmental humanities, in the environmental sciences, and in the creative arts and invest in these curricula a greater, practical potential to combat ecological crisis.

In advanced courses of study in the environmental humanities, the work of creating art in association with places might inspire in students a personal, holistic sort of engagement with course content. This potential follows from the suspension of established ways of knowing that artistic invention requires and from the experience of continuity with place that artistic invention ultimately produces. By means of creating art in association with place, therefore, students might come to recognize in their own experience the mutual ways in which they and the places in association with which they create art each inform the other. In addition to affording students a consequent sense of belonging within the places in association with which they create art, this sense of mutual constitution might serve students as a personal, experiential point of reference for the ecological ontological principles that environmental humanities courses address. The consonance that artistic invention helps to establish between personal experience and ecological

ontological principles might more effectively sensitize students to the problems that ontological division causes and inspire them to pursue practical efforts to combat ecological crisis.

In courses of study in the environmental sciences, artistic invention in association with places might expand in the experience of students the scope and the influence of scientific investigation. As a preliminary exercise in the process of conducting field research, artistic invention in association with investigated sites might prompt student awareness of the particular features of these sites. This awareness might deepen the nuance and the sophistication of both the scientific data that students gather and the conclusions that they draw from this data. This awareness might also expand the significance of scientific research in the experience of students by prompting them to recognize the scientific features that account for their particular aesthetic appreciation of research sites and to acknowledge the influence of their lived experience upon their processes of gathering and interpreting scientific data. In the curricula of environmental science courses, therefore, artistic invention in association with places might both complement and challenge the hegemony of scientific objectivism and inspire in students a more subjective sort of appreciation of research sites. Such appreciation might more effectively motivate pragmatic efforts to promote the ecological viability of research sites.

Finally, the inclusion of artistic invention in association with place in the curricula of creative arts courses might encourage student awareness of the potential for artistic invention to disclose to the artist the existential continuity of humanity and the environment. In addition to inspiring in students a sense of belonging within the places in association with which they create art, this awareness might encourage student recognition of the practical potential of artistic invention in association with place to effect constructive change in the world and might motivate students to undertake artistic invention in the interest of inspiring such change.

While my research on artistic engagement with Monadnock discloses the constructive ecological possibilities of artistic invention, it also raises a number of important questions that might be addressed in future research. Since my conclusions are based upon artistic engagement with Monadnock, in particular, and since Monadnock is a picturesque rural landscape the view of which shows few, if any, indications of environmental degradation, my research invites further investigation of artistic engagement with degraded and/or urban places that summon less favorable aesthetic appreciations. Such investigation might disclose points of difference in the experiential process of artistic invention and might reveal a means of developing a sense of continuity with places that are in greater need of environmental remediation than such rural landscapes as Monadnock. Moreover, my research invites consideration of the process of creating environmental art as opposed to the more traditional art in association with place that my research addresses. Such consideration might reveal distinctive ways in which the work of creating art that is part of the environment in which it is created prompts lived experience of ecological ontology. Moreover, such consideration might reveal that the process of creating environmental art more effectively prompts lived experience of the interspecies entanglement that contemporary ecological ontologies emphasize. These questions, which transcend the scope of my research on artistic invention in association with Monadnock, might prompt discovery of novel means of implementing ecological ontological ideals.

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I have discussed the implications that follow from the consonance that I established between artistic invention in association with Monadnock and Berleant's aesthetics of engagement. Based upon my observation of the identity of the way of being in the world that intellectual ecological ontologies promote and the lived aesthetic

experience that artistic invention in association with Monadnock inspires, I identified artistic invention in association with place as a vehicle for implementing ecological ontology—for coming to be in the world in the way that intellectual ecological ontologies promote and inhibit. The potential for artistic invention in association with place to prompt the lived experience of continuity with environment that remediation of ecological crisis seems to require establishes artistic invention in association with place as a practice that might be undertaken in the pursuit of a sustainable way of being in the world. By engaging in artistic invention in association with place, we might gain awareness of ourselves as worldly beings who belong to a worldly community and thus gain motivation to live in such a way that promotes the welfare of ourselves and our world.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Prospective Research Participant,

I am a PhD student in the Environmental Studies department at Antioch University New England. I am writing a dissertation on the experience of creative engagement with Monadnock. As you likely know, Monadnock has a long history of inspiring cultural production that includes literature, visual art, music, dance, ritual spirituality, and various forms of athletic activity. I am interested in discovering how and why Monadnock inspires such cultural production and how the experience of interacting creatively with the mountain affects people's subjective experience of the mountain. In an effort to answer these questions, I intend to conduct research interviews with various people who have interacted creatively with Monadnock.

Participants in my research study will be asked to engage in three semi-structured interviews, each of which will be at least one hour in duration. The first of these interviews will engage participants in discussion of their personal life history with a particular focus on past experiences that led them to interact creatively with Monadnock. The second of these interviews will engage participants in detailed description of their immediate experience of interacting creatively with Monadnock. The third of these interviews will engage participants in a collaborative process of discerning from their own experience how and why Monadnock inspires creative invention and how the experience of creative invention, in turn, conditions their appreciation of the mountain.

The benefits of participation in my research study will more than likely outweigh any risks that such participation might pose. While the process of recalling events and circumstances that inspire creative engagement with Monadnock might conjure memory of unpleasant or traumatic past experience, this process promises each participant the benefit of enhanced understanding of his or her experience of creative engagement with Monadnock. Such

understanding will develop during interviews in which participants will be encouraged both to discern the meaning that they gain from creative engagement with Monadnock and to reflect upon the ways in which such creative engagement has conditioned their appreciation of the mountain.

Participation in my research study is entirely voluntary and confidential. Thus, an individual may abstain from responding to particular interview prompts and may withdraw entirely from participation in my research study at any time and without penalty. Additionally, any participant's wish to remain anonymous will be honored and a pseudonym will be used in any written material about that participant.

If participants have any further questions about my research study, they may contact me, Jonathan W. Coffin, via telephone or via e-mail. If participants have questions about their rights as research participants, they may contact the Chair of Antioch University New England Institutional Review Board or the Provost and Chief Executive Officer of Antioch University New England.

I thank you, and I look forward to conversing with you in the near future.

Jonathan W. Coffin

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT RELEASE AGREEMENT¹

I agree to participate in a research study of the lived experience of creative engagement with Monadnock. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of completing a Ph.D. degree, including a dissertation and any future publication. I understand that a brief synopsis of each participant, including myself, will be used and will include the following information: first name (or pseudonym), gender identity, age, and any information about my past and present experience that might help to explain my experience of creative engagement with Monadnock and the meaning that I derive from it. I grant permission for the above personal information to be used. I agree to meet at the following location _____ on the following date _____ at _____ for an initial interview of 1 to 2 hours. In addition, I agree to be available on two additional occasions at mutually agreed upon times and places for additional interviews that will last between 1 ½ and two hours. I also grant permission to the audio recording of all interviews.

Research Participant/Date

¹ Adapted from Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1994), 178.