

Flights, Intervals and Conversions:

The Aesthetic-Politics of Jacques Rancière

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Thank you to my supervisor Jean-Philippe Deranty

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Introduction

Jacques Rancière's philosophy is a complex and intricate network of history, politics, poetics and their people. Each episode of his philosophical writings is an accumulative body of work where oblique connections are made to his earlier works; these are all held together by his conceptual analysis of modern being. This thesis attempts to demonstrate this by interconnecting his key concepts alongside an analysis of the spatial and temporal conditions expressed in his work. In particular, certain spatio-temporal moments of emancipation that feature in his work are inherently aesthetic, containing both ethical and political dimensions. I have called these dimensions *flights*, *intervals* and *conversions*. It is this spatio-temporal aspect of Rancière's philosophy that both resonates and interests me because of my background in design and interior architecture. This, I believe, has allowed me to connect the different periods of his work in, I hope, a new and interesting way via an interpretive and thematic approach.

There are four movements to this thesis, individually themed but linked by an overall analysis of space-time. Firstly, 'An introduction to Rancière' is a biographical account of Rancière's break from Althusserian-Marxism; this afforded him his own philosophical flight toward Radical Equality. Then I follow with an outline of his key concepts: Equality of the Intelligences, The Distribution of the Sensible, Aesthetic-Politics, and the Regimes of the Arts. These spatio-temporal dimensions are the necessary conditions and circumstances needed to explain the possibilities of flights, intervals and conversions.

Secondly, 'Crossing the borders of the im-possible' are the Rancièrian journey and voyage, the spatio-temporal moments that I have called flights. They are escapes – a dissensus – either individual or collective, from the prescribed identities of the social logic. The examples discussed here are historical figures, both real and fictional, namely Louis Gabriel Gauny, Gustave Flaubert and his novel *Madame Bovary*.

Thirdly, what I call intervals – the space-time that follows flights and precede a certainty – are analysed from Rancière's account of gestures. Here I look at the historical import on bodies, behavior and emotions and its hermeneutic, interpretive aspects. Rancière's account of Roberto Rosellini's film *Europa 51*, Jules Michelet and the space of nothing is exemplified.

Finally, 'The Surface of Conversion' is a discourse on Rancière's aesthetic-politic and the regimes of arts from the material and symbolic, spatio-temporal, realm of the applied arts. Here we see how collective flights have affected and ultimately altered the distribution of the sensible. I follow on from Rancière's discussion of Art Nouveau and Modernism, to give an account of their predecessor – The Aesthetic Movement. This seminal ethical, political and aesthetic flight which set in motion the aestheticized life and the creation of a new, expanded *partage*, directly links to his concepts on education and the police. Based on these examples I

conclude that the interval, the in-between of logos and pathos, is the situation of Rancière's aesthetic value that yields ethical, political and aesthetic emancipatory possibilities.

CHAPTER ONE. An Introduction to Rancière.

Foundational episodes

Studying at the École Normale Supérieure in the 1960s Rancière was under the direction of Louis Althusser who then held the position of *agrégé répétiteur*. Althusser is credited with opening up new theoretical perspectives at the school, including his original reinterpretation of Marx's concept of alienation and labour. He claimed these forms of experience were the sole production of capital's structural logic rather than any phenomenological understanding. Joseph Tanke in his book *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction, Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*¹ states Althusser's account of Marxism suggests an attempt 'to distance Marxism from his humanist platform'.²

Althusser proclaimed that a necessary 'radical distinction between science and ideology'³ had to be made in Marxist philosophy to perpetuate Marxist thought. This radical distinction proclaimed that ideology was a bourgeois strategy - a theoretical framework that constructs and maintains its own system of domination. Moreover, the scientific investigative rendition of Marxism - material historicism - provided a more truthful analysis of historic-social arrangements i.e., hierarchy, capital and divisions of labour: thus disclosing the ideological claims of the bourgeois as false. According to Althusser, the scientific account of Marx was the way forward for emancipatory politics.

The student protests and workers' revolts in Paris, May 1968, exposed a lack of confidence in the government and system of capital. However, this uprising disrupted relations between the workers, trade unions and the French Communist Party. A large part of the revolutionary forces felt the Communists were out of touch with their concerns. The union leaders reassessed the call for radical change and the ousting of the de Gaulle government, and diverted the strikers' struggle into a fight for increased wages. The struggle, brutally crushed by the police, led to great disillusionment in the young leftist generation with the operations of the Communist Party. This disillusionment was an ideological break for Rancière. He, a former student, supporter of and co-author with Althusser, (now a member and leading intellect of the French Communist Party) parted ideological ways, abandoning the tenets of Althusserian-Marxism. According to Rancière, the Althusserian belief in the Party's central organizational role seemed out of place with those whom it represented. Instead, as we see explicitly in Rancière's later writings, he rejects - flees - the scientific-Marxist declaration of Althusser believing that, ultimately, it implies that the working-class are unable to distinguish the reality

¹ Joseph J. Tanke. "The Lesson of Althusser". *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction, Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. London and New York, Continuum International Publishing Group. 2011

² Ibid., p. 12

³ Jean-Philippe Deranty (Ed). "Introduction: a journey in equality". *Jacques Rancière Key Concepts*. Durham, Acumen Publishing Limited. 2010. p. 3

of their situation without having the top down ‘truths’ of a scientific Marxist theory to guide them to take the necessary political action for their liberation.

Rancière sees that Althusser’s scientific platform represents the same traditional hierarchical arrangement of power and the same structural logic of separation between manual and intellectual labour that has dominated Western systems since classical times. For Rancière, this false belief that the working-class are unable to speak, or act, in pursuit of their own liberation, without the knowledge of those in charge of emancipatory discourse - intellectuals, theorists and Party leaders - becomes the basis of his overriding concept of radical equality.

In 1974 Rancière made a formal and public break with Althusserian ideology in his book *Althusser’s Lesson (La Leçon d’Althusser)* in which he writes:

It is a discourse that allows one to speak for others, that cancels out the place and subject of its own speech: such is the mechanism that has found its paradigmatic form in Althusserian discourse, founded as it is on a denial of the place from which it speaks, of what it speaks about, and of who it speaks to.⁴

The importance of speech and the position from which one speaks is the operative factor here. Rancière argues that it is precisely the spatial and temporal arrangements of the social world – the social field – that either allows or denies a place for speech, a speech that is either claimed to be audible or just noise by those who dominate the arrangement of the social field. This spatial arrangement with its subsequent denial of place – speech - has an irreducible relation to in-equality for Rancière, and establishes his thinking and writings in the following decades e.g. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, the distribution of the sensible and his aesthetic-politics.

Rancière’s deep egalitarianism propels him into the archives to retrieve, out of history, the voice of the workers (*la parole ouvrière*), resulting in his book, *The Nights of Labour*, entitled in English, *Proletarian Nights, The Workers’ Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*.⁵ Published in France in 1981 this book had a double effect. Firstly, the voice of the workers exposed their accounts of hope and discontent, their theoretical and poetical writings,⁶ their political manifestos and organizational techniques. Secondly, it revealed their intellectual capacities, and thus disrupted the constructed social perceptions rendered toward the working-class. This pernicious conditioning, when internalized, prevents recognition within oneself of such abilities, thus restricting the capacity for meaningful discourse with others, in particular those who dominate the social field.

⁴ Todd May. *Jacques Rancière, Althusser’s Lesson*. Emiliano Battista (Tran), Clemson University. Continuum. 2011. p. 122. From “Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews”. An Electronic Journal. ndpr.nd.edu/news/28304.althusser.s.lesson.

⁵ Jacques Rancière. *Proletarian Nights The Workers’ Dream in Nineteenth Century France*. UK & US, Verso. 2012

⁶ Deranty. “Logical revolts”. *Key Concepts*. p. 17

Rancière's journey into the archives of the nineteenth century French labour movement brings to light subjects and material that will have a profound effect on his future philosophical path. Indeed, *The Nights of Labour* is a work that he keeps returning to. For instance, in an interview⁷ twenty-eight years after the first publication of *Nights of Labour*, Rancière discusses the intentions of the book. It was a disclosure of new perceptions about the idea of the proletariat and their entitlement to a life of thought and aesthetics.

In the 1830s this entitlement, this taking and entering into a world of thought and culture, was a threat to bourgeois perceptions of themselves: the domain of culture and intellect belonged to them. It is precisely this displacement of working-class identity - remembering this is an identity constructed by those who dominate the social field - which troubled bourgeois sensibilities and their sense of self-understanding. For the workers' struggle is supposed to be one fought around wages and working conditions - material improvement. Instead the *Nights of Labour* exposed the workers' desire to cross the borders of prescribed conditions and conditioning - as Rancière defines it, 'the impossible'.⁸ Rather than representing a single unified account of class consciousness, Rancière reveals multiple individual voices - writings and actions - as a wanting to 'become entirely human, with all the possibilities of a human being and not only having what is possible to do for workers'.⁹ This is the first, immediate sense we see of Rancière's notion of voyage - flight - the fleeing from existing conditions (much like his own intellectual and even paternal flight breaking away from Althusserian ideology). This flight, this crossing of a border of impossibility, of being seen and being heard in a place not considered the workers' right to occupy, is the space of thought and aesthetics.

This spatial metaphor of the 'impossible' crossing is also temporal, as Rancière states, a crossing of time: the *Nights of Labour* presents a 'subversion of time'.¹⁰ The workers resist, challenge, and refuse the exhaustion of daily labour with their auto-didactic activities in the evenings. Here the flight is an escape from time, from the social underpinning of how one is supposed to live one's time, which expresses itself in the aesthetic recomposing of day and night. Instead of resting the labourers' nights become times of intellectual escape. Rancière clarifies that the *Nights of Labour* is not only a study of intellectual possibilities but also about the material necessities of the worker. The link between intellectual capabilities and the material necessities of life becomes clear when Rancière discusses the politics, power and social relations evident in his social ontology - the distribution of the sensible, which will be discussed further on in this chapter.

⁷ Jacques Rancière and Lawrence Liang. "Interview with Jacques Rancière". Lodi Gardens, Delhi. 5 February. 2009
From <http://egs.edu/faculty/jacques-rancière/articles/interview-with>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The Rancièrian flight, aesthetic and intellectual, as we have just seen in the case of the workers, has its basis in equality. I will now explore flight as a spatio-temporal episode of equality through his concept 'equality of intelligences'.¹¹ This is found in his argument against the traditional hierarchical approach to education, which institutionalized inequality as the social logic. In terms of education, the flight is shown in the practice of Universal Learning. He also proposes a break, (the moment of possibility toward a flight of intellectual emancipation) away from the social logic arguing that all forms of communication start from the point of equality.

Rancière responded to the debate on educational reform in France in the 1980s with his book, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster, Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, which further expanded his concept of radical equality. The book recounts the life of Joseph Jacotot, French revolutionary and educational philosopher (1770-1840), and his experience as lecturer at the University of Louvain in Belgium. As in *The Nights of Labour*, we see Rancière's subject – Jacotot – emerge from the archives. Rancière's method of articulation in the *Ignorant Schoolmaster* is a merging of both his and Jacotot's voices; arguably a form of retroactive collaboration. As Yves Citton has convincingly shown, Rancière re-writes¹² rather than explains Jacotot's method. Rancière's tactical non-clarity of a singular voice is a means of communicative knowledge, speculatively allowing the reader to translate and interpret. This runs parallel to Jacotot's discovery that 'explanation runs contrary to emancipation'.¹³ This merging of author and subject voice is a Rancièrian literary strategy of equality in practice. He calls this *literarity*. Alison Ross, Rancièrian scholar, says this:

literarity...[is a] new grammar for the politics of literature...[it is part of the] modern poetic revolution...[where]...modern literature disregards the hierarchies of the old representational systems...[it is an] intermeshing of fields of aesthetics and politics...it brings with it layers of meaning from a number of different traditions.¹⁴

Literarity reconfigures the formal distinctions of literature, and the disciplinary distinctions between history, politics, sociology and aesthetics.¹⁵

Returning to Jacotot, his experiments in Universal Learning – 'intellectual emancipation' espoused the belief that humans have equal intellectual capabilities: what differs is the will, in particular the will to learn. He concluded that we are able to instruct ourselves, and that we

¹¹ Jacques Rancière *The Ignorant Schoolmaster, Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*.

From Yves Citton. "The ignorant schoolmaster: knowledge and authority". *Key Concepts*. p.28

¹² Yves Citton. "The ignorant schoolmaster: knowledge and authority". *Key Concepts*. p. 25

¹³ Ibid., p. 25

¹⁴ Alison Ross. "Expressivity, literarity, mute speech". *Key Concepts*. pp.133-134

¹⁵ James Swenson. "Style indirect libre". *Jacques Rancière History, Politics, Aesthetics*. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (Eds). Durham and London, Duke University Press. 2009. p. 259

can teach what we do not know. This was borne out of his experiments in France and his teaching in Belgium. The difference in language between the French lecturer and the Belgium students, a seeming impediment to learning, instead proved to be the access point into the gaining of knowledge. Through studying a bilingual edition of *Télémaque* the students taught themselves French without Jacotot's direction. Having gained enough understanding of the language they were then capable of translating and composing essays about its meaning in French. This was achieved without the orthodox pedagogical system of teacher who knows and student who does not know. Jacotot came to the understanding that we are able to instruct ourselves and, as Rancière states, the ignorant person can teach another.

For Jacotot, and indeed, Rancière, Universal Learning is a self-organizing system of education where *everything is in everything*, meaning an ability to learn through the associative power of making connections i.e., applying what is already known and referring everything to that. This enables students to learn and gain knowledge for themselves in the belief that they already possess the intelligence to do so. The *Télémaque* example revealed that in making connections (intellectual flights), recognizing patterns, communicating, using their creative ability and self-correction, the students were able to acquire knowledge. As Citton claims, 'this is how all of us learned our mother tongue'.¹⁶ Rancière argues there is already an unmistakable presupposition of equality in the fact that we at least share the same language. It is a space-time already known, understood, accepted and therefore possessed, hence further knowledge equals further possession of the equality of intelligences. Communication, as an act of intelligence, attests to humans possessing equal mental abilities.

Rancière takes further Jacotot's account of intelligence and learning and claims it operates in all acts of the human spirit. Through all aspects, opportunities and im-possibilities, one discovers one's own capacities, 'one learns not by internalizing the knowledge of another, but through the exercise of one's own faculties',¹⁷ and it is here we see Rancière's account of pedagogy. The schoolmaster's use of explication is not a way of providing equality through education, as we would suppose, but rather an installation of the stultifying bond of social order. The notion that one's intelligence must be subordinated to another's in order to be taught instills a deep sense of in-equality between who knows and the one who does not. This hierarchy of teaching constructs a form of socialization (a placing of bodies and their associated understandings based on domination and hierarchy), and points to what Rancière later defines as the social logic that 'generates a perpetual structure of in-equality'.¹⁸ It is an institutional in-equality (stultification) that constructs simultaneously a position of mastery and a position of those who need to be mastered; the subordination of intelligence and, possibly, the subordination of will. As Rancière states:

¹⁶ Citton. "The ignorant schoolmaster: knowledge and authority". *Key Concepts*. p.27

¹⁷ Tanke. "The Lesson of Althusser". *Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p. 35

¹⁸ Citton. "The ignorant schoolmaster: knowledge and authority". *Key Concepts*. p. 28

Education is supposed to be the way to make people equal, starting from inequality. It is at the same time the logic of pedagogy and also the logic of progress, and a progressive thinking that of course people are not equal and lower class people are not equal...[y]ou must not go towards equality but must start from equality.¹⁹

This starting from equality, the enabling of one's own discoveries – flights – is a clear break from pedagogical structure and practice; it is the emancipation of people from servitude, precisely Jacotot's account of educative emancipation and what Rancière defines as radical equality. Tanke notes: 'Universal teaching's aim is not to form scholars rather its goal was to enable students to launch their own intellectual adventures'.²⁰ Emancipation – intellectual emancipation – is when the 'mind realizes its own power'.²¹ Intellectual emancipation is the property of the individual, something the individual possesses, Rancière avers. This whole analysis relies on Rancière's adoption of Jacotot's classical conception of the individual:

Man is a will served by an intelligence...Will is a rational power...a thinking subject who is aware of himself through the action he exerts on himself and on other bodies.²²

Not only will and intelligence but importantly for Rancière, the sensible – perception – is the making of the individual. Rancière refines his account of the equality of intelligences into the equality of the senses making it the basis of radical equality. Radical equality becomes the recognition of equality in the other as much as in the self. When recognized, the desire to subordinate another collapses, and this relational effect of emancipation exposes the fullness of Rancière's conceptual analysis of radical equality.

According to Rancière there is no natural form of domination in human society, therefore material and symbolic in-equality is not a matter of unequal intelligences but a system of inequity based on domination i.e., the system we have is constructed from the effects of inequitable actions, not unequal intelligences. This system is thus an organization of the social – the people – that systematically makes a place for some individuals to be seen and heard and others not. Rancière proposes that the structures of domination and systems of subordination move well beyond the learning regime of the schoolroom. This understanding became the basis of his political theory and his subsequent analysis of the social logic.

Rancière equates the previous 'lesson' of Althusser and scientific Marxism with the 'lesson' of the schoolmaster (pedagogue) and student (subordinate) practice of learning. In both cases can be seen the same system of hierarchy and domination. Since one claims to emancipate the

¹⁹ Rancière and Liang. "Interview with Jacques Rancière"

²⁰ Tanke. "Lessons from Equality". *Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p.38

²¹ Ibid., p.38

²² Jacques Rancière. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster, Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Kristen Ross (Trans). California, Stanford University Press. 1991 edition. p. 54
Cited abahlali.org/files/Ranciere.pdf.

other on their behalf it, too, is a way of maintaining a system of dominant logic and subordination. It is a dismissal of the capabilities of those subordinated, the overriding of their voice, their intelligence and their ability to articulate their own emancipatory desires. Because individuals have internalized the inequity of the social logic they become unable to express their own intelligence and emancipatory desires for actual change. This system of domination and subordination, rather than equal intelligences, makes clear for Rancière that the social logic of inequity is a wrong and therefore unacceptable.

Again, as with the *Nights of Labour*, Rancière defines space-time (an aesthetic condition) as imperative in the account of equality. Tanke stipulates this Rancièrian proposition: 'Equality cannot be gradually implemented...it is either asserted at the outset or it is irremediably lost'²³ and so, for Rancière, equality is declared at the outset and constantly verified.²⁴ It is in a specific space-time configuration – an occasion – that a gesture of equality reveals a new light in relations: equality is not an ambition, it is a point of departure. This spatio-temporal assumption of arrant equality, declared at the moment, is the place of departure that opens up new spaces of experience, perception and possible outcomes. Tanke argues that:

For Rancière, the idea of equality of intelligences is an ever-renewable, untimely presupposition that can disrupt a given distribution of the sensible. In this respect, it plays an essential role in his account of politics. For him, politics is the process of staging the conflict between the world of hierarchy and the one fashioned under the assumption of equality.²⁵

Rancière defines politics as dissensus, where the equality of intelligence takes hold and disrupts the given situation of hierarchical domination. This social logic of hierarchical domination is what Rancière has claimed as the distribution of the sensible – *le partage du sensible*. This dissensus can, of course, take the form of disagreement, riot and symbolic practices and, in the terms of this thesis – flights and intervals. How the Rancièrian flight and interval takes forms of dissensus will be discussed later; firstly I must discuss his social ontology – the distribution of the sensible – as the means by which it makes possible the Rancièrian flight.

²³ Tanke. "Lessons from Equality". *Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p.36

²⁴ Ibid., paraphrase.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 39

The Distribution of the Sensible

La Partage du Sensible

The distribution of the sensible is Rancière's key concept underpinning his vision of the social field and all things social that occur within it, thus a crucial element that frames the Rancièrian flight:

I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution.²⁶

Distribution immediately discloses a space-time of organization - the *sensible* - the French term denoting the perceptual realm. We have a complex historical world of determinations, inequality qua domination, political subjectivities and aesthetics. Rancière's distribution of the sensible is the sphere of his political, social and aesthetic analysis.

Davide Panagia's²⁷ translated account of the French word *partage* is an appropriate starting point. Panagia reminds us that the term *partage* has a twofold meaning; a sharing of what is in the common, and the separation - the division - of what is out of the common. Furthermore, it is also to be understood in terms of property and propriety; this *partage* not only locates the order of material ownership but also the terms of availability of knowledge and the sensible - what is deemed necessary or worthy of being perceived. Rancière's twofold strategy is one he uses often to disclose the contradictions and ambiguities imbedded in the social logic.

The distribution of the sensible is Rancière's phrase for material landscapes that are also symbolic, 'it is the construction of a territory'.²⁸ For instance, the distribution of the sensible begins as an historical cartography established and solidified in classical Western philosophy. This *partage* is a line of division and as he states, 'has been the object of my constant study...the vital thread tying together all of my research'.²⁹ This line, as the formulation of his

²⁶ Jacques Rancière. "The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics". *The Politics of Aesthetics, The Distribution of the Sensible*. Gabriel Rockhill (Trans). London & New York, Continuum. 2011. p.12

²⁷ Davide Panagia, "Partage du sensible": the distribution of the sensible". *Key Concepts*.

²⁸ Jacques Rancière and Sudeep Dasgupta "Art is going elsewhere. And politics has to catch it". In *Krisi* 2008, Issue 1, (English) <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/Jacques-ranciere/articles>.

social ontology, reveals the centrality of space-time configurations in his work. This dynamic line of division, he argues, creates and simultaneously opens up a space of tension; it is a space of political contestation and therefore dissensus, hence this line is ever-shifting. Rancière argues the distribution of the sensible needs constant re-articulation by the excluded and the unaccounted-for elements of society via challenging the political order, which includes the conditions of what is perceivable. The aesthetics of Rancière's political theory is made clear with his concept of the distribution of the sensible.

Panagia usefully remarks that this line – *partage* – is in fact multiple and that the world is composed of these vulnerable lines. This makes good sense when we think of Rancière's position of the individual – equality of the sensible – in relation to inequality and dissensus. The line of division, by its very nature, determines perceptual actualities under the assumption of who and what can be seen and heard in the public arena. This is already determined by pre-ordained configurations of who has the necessary capabilities i.e., talent, time and space, based on hierarchical presuppositions. It therefore defines the distribution of bodies, political communities and the organization of the social. Its logic creates and maintains a perpetual structure of inequality. It is both impossibility and possibility; simultaneously its structural logic makes possible dissensus, an eruption and disruption from those with no voice – *sans part* – 'the part of those who have no part',³⁰ as Rancière defines it. This vital thread of the *partage* originates in the *Ignorant Schoolmaster* and *Nights of Labour*. At its core are the dominant figure and the subordinate one.

For Rancière Plato's *Republic*, which can be taken to represent the birthplace of politics as discussed in the tradition of Western philosophy, is a tremendously revealing text, as to where this line of the sensible is typically drawn out. Here Plato determines who has the right to speak within the so-called common – certainly not women, slaves or the artisan (worker) for they are too busy to do anything other than work. Work – production – is prioritised here, for 'work will not wait'.³¹ The first line of the distribution of the sensible is borne, according to Rancière it:

Reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed. Having a particular 'occupation' thereby determines the ability or inability to take charge of what is common to the community; it defines what is visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language, etc.³²

²⁹ Jacques Rancière. *The Philosopher and His Poor*. pp. 225-7. Cited "Jacques Rancière and the (Re) Distribution of the Sensible: Five Lessons" in *Artistic Research. Art&Research. A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*. Ross Birell Editorial. Volume 2. No.1. Summer 2008 <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n1editorial.html>

³⁰ Jacques Rancière. *Dis-agreement*. Julie Ross (Trans). U.S.A. The University of Minnesota Press. 1999. p. 30

³¹ Rancière. "The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics". *Politics and Aesthetics*. p. 12

³² *Ibid.*, p. 12-13

This too is aesthetic: it is the appearance of the composition of the space-time of what can and cannot be seen, what can be said as opposed to what is audible i.e., speech versus noise, as the space of political experience.

The socio-cultural maintenance of the distribution of the sensible, Rancière claims, operates via a policing through the action of the police. He makes clear that this police order is not always in the negative position of state oppression or physical violence. Nor is it only a police of punitive measures i.e., the uniform that maintains daily general laws, although this too is part of the police order. Rancière's police order is any hierarchical social order which arranges bodies in certain places, occupations and social roles. What we would normally class as politics - policy-making, parliamentary legislation, executive orders, judicial decisions and economic arrangements³³ - is the practice of the police order. He sees the role of the police as 'the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles for legitimizing this distribution'.³⁴ It generates what is visible and sayable, and determines intelligibility, perceptibility, and the areas of marginalization. Here, Rancière's intention is to reclaim politics - social organization - as the practice of the people, thus separating it from the actions - distributive powers - of the police order. Politics as dissensus, as a re-articulation of the distribution of the sensible, is the true account of politics for Rancière.

Rancière's distribution of the sensible, the social logic with its implicit and explicit forms of domination, ultimately compartmentalizes space-time and determines people's place and perceptions within it. Thankfully, Rancière's philosophy reveals a way out of the bind, the knot; and this is available precisely through the tension inherent within it, the sphere of the distribution of the sensible itself. People have capabilities and the will to remove themselves from the categories of domination, pre-determined identities, classifications, and the allocated space-time configurations. One aspect of this is Rancière's *Subjectivization*, where a political subject 'extracts itself from the dominant categories of identification and classification, by treating a wrong and attempting to implement equality'.³⁵ In the following chapter I will discuss two examples of these spatio-temporal moments of extracting oneself from the dominant order – *partage*. These are the Rancièrian flights of individual emancipation.

Aesthetic-Politics and The Regimes of the Arts

Rancière's aesthetic-politics and the regimes of the arts is itself a construction of the distribution of the sensible, therefore this conceptual framework has an important relevance to this paper, as flights and intervals are also aesthetic-political episodes of emancipation away from and even toward these distributions. The examples given by Rancière, which are

³³ Samuel A. Chambers. "Police and oligarchy". *Key Concepts*. p. 61

³⁴ Ibid., *Dis-agreement*. p.28

³⁵ Rancière. "Glossary of Technical Terms". *The Politics of Aesthetics*. p. 92

discussed in this thesis, are held within and integral to, his account of the aesthetic regime. In chapter four conversions we see this juncture, of aesthetic-politics and the three regimes of the arts become apparent in Rancière's discussion of social art. Rancière's aesthetic-politic is an analysis of the relation between art and politics. This relation is not to be understood in terms of an aestheticisation of politics nor is it a politicisation of art - Rancière's concept of aesthetic-politics is that both are structures of the same practice, the composition of the space-time of the visible and audible. They both establish the modes of perception via techniques of inclusion and exclusion as to what is made available to the space-time of the common.

Rancière's original conception of aesthetics operates outside of theories of taste, judgment or pleasure, rather

as the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and stakes of politics as a form of experience.³⁶

The above quotation reveals that for Rancière aesthetics has political implications and politics has an aesthetic dimension: this he calls aesthetic-politics, and is evident in his claim:

Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of space and the possibilities of time.³⁷

With the regimes of the arts, we see Rancière's account of art as a series of three main historical stages that define the aesthetic politic, and hence the social logic of its age.

These regimes have historical characterizations, although it needs to be noted that they are not totally locked into their historical situation. An example of this will become evident in the chapter on social art. The ideological basis of these regimes resonates with Foucault's 'big episteme' thinking; each regime imposes norms by postulating certain structures of thought that create a general stage of reason. This produces an aesthetic – a perceptual, practical and political form of social logic. Firstly there is the ethical regime of art and, secondly, the poetic/representative regime of arts and, last, the aesthetic regime of the arts.

The ethical regime of art Rancière defines as Platonic. In this regime, art is questioned on two accounts. Firstly, what is its origin? This question itself holds a truth content. Secondly, what is the end purpose of this art? What is to be its use, and what effect will it inscribe on the ethos of the individual and/or the community? The ethical regime is defined in terms of its rules of distribution and its educative effect. We see this account of the ethical art in Plato's *The*

³⁶ Rancière. "The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics". *The Politics of Aesthetics*. p. 13

³⁷ Ibid.,p.13

Republic where he deems poetry and theatre as ‘structure-giving forms’³⁸ having a detrimental effect on the community by their ability to subvert the patterns of Platonic distribution. Both occupy a space in the common - the stage - with their fables, fantasies and fictions. This disrupts clear partitions of identity. Similarly in the practice of writing their words wander, circulating the countryside, destroying legitimate language with their projections of other space-time relations of bodies, identities and speech. I argue further on in the section titled ‘the purified line of the *partage*’, that Rancière’s account of the ethical regime re-emerges in the social art flight of Modernist architecture and design.

The poetic or representative regime of the arts Rancière positions as Aristotelian. The clear break from the ethical regime is that here the image identifies its substance, and operates on the practice of mimesis – imitation. It is ‘the fabrication of a plot arranging actions that represent the activities of men, which is the foremost issue, to the detriment of the *essence* of the image’.³⁹ The poetic regime links the condition – character and situation - with proper actions, ways of doing and making. Thus there is a creation of a normativity based on the hierarchical i.e., a Shakespearean play associates tragedy with the rich and powerful, comedy is an action of the ordinary people.

The final act of this triptych of arts regimes is the aesthetic regime. On the whole, this art contravenes the makings and mimesis of the poetic/representative regime and the truths and effects of the ethical regime. The aesthetic regime has freed itself from the hierarchy of distributions and concern of community effect; Rancière defines it as an aesthetic revolution. It performs a new sensible mode of experience in that it posits art to have the potential to be anywhere and about anything. The aesthetic regime is the experience of the modern democratic age, in that art is autonomous, yet also strips itself free of autonomous ranking by merging into the practicalities of everydayness. Art can now be something else, its past reinterpreted and its future reinvented. It is an art of experience and interpretation for both artist and spectator. The aesthetic regime embeds a contradiction within itself, both as a sense-making – logos – of the artistic product (be it art or social art), simultaneously with the sense experience – pathos – the non-sense. Logos and pathos fuse and become the flip-side of each other, creating a spatially metaphoric knot, which Rancière defines as the structural capacity of this regime.

Rancière’s conceptual analyses of modern being, as defined in the distribution of the sensible, in-equality, aesthetic-politics and the regimes of arts, are all the necessary conditions both as background and foreground for the Rancièrian flight. In the following chapters we see this portrayed in Rancière’s example of nineteenth and twentieth century figures of the aesthetic regime: how these flights are emancipatory moments in which they reconfigure their social

³⁸ Ibid., p.13

³⁹ Rancière. “Artistic Regimes and Shortcomings of the Notion of Modernity.” *The Politics of Aesthetics*. p. 21

field. The final chapter reveals how flights of the creative kind in the social arts reformulate the *partage* as well as how flights become intervals that can provide egalitarian promise.

CHAPTER TWO. Crossing the borders of the im-possible

Flights

In *The Politics of Aesthetics*,⁴⁰ Rancière stresses the importance of Friedrich Schiller's concept of the aesthetic state - 'a pure instance of suspension, a moment where form is experienced for itself'⁴¹ - as *the* manifesto for the aesthetic regime, and hence an inherent condition of Modernity. These aesthetic states, or as Rancière calls them, aesthetic suspensions or voyages, are an implicit yet defining feature in his work. I take these and name them flights, and make them an explicit condition of Rancière's philosophical discourse i.e., the Rancièrian flight. These flights are singular events, specific to local configurations. To be clear, flights are moments made in response, and a reaction to, a particular partition of the distribution of the sensible. Therefore, as a reaction to the *partage*, they are a dissensus, be it political confrontation or a more subtle act of imagination or daydreaming. Rancière's idea of a flight as a legitimate act of reconfiguring the *partage*, is an act of equality, a breaking away from the imposed identifications and prescribed placements, to the creating of connections to new worlds of sense perceptions: flights are moments of emancipation.

With the Rancièrian flight there is always a moment, an event, where life breaks open revealing aspects of itself. This event – rupture – according to Rancièrian examples, can be a revolution, the death of a son, an encounter with the other, a discovering of the world of words, or the sensuous rapture of a religious spectacle. This life that shatters is the life of the social field organized according to the *partage du sensible* – where the formerly prescribed distribution and allocation of bodies and perceptual actualities to a certain space and time falls apart, undoing the 'certainties of place'.⁴² Rancière says it is the 'recognition of reality'.⁴³ This *partage* falls apart precisely because of what it is and what it does; the aesthetic-politic framing that particular space-time coordinate becomes so pronounced it bursts open from its own division of distribution. These spatio-temporal moments are inherently aesthetic even if felt on a societal level or within the isolation of one's own perceptual casing. This irruption becomes the mark, the point of departure, to enter new possible territories of perceptual experience - other ways of being. For Rancière, the *partage* and the rupture of it, is what makes flight possible. These flights, both individual or collective, are implied throughout Rancière's cumulative body of work, becoming most distinct in his book *Short Voyages to the Land of the People*. We can see this emerge in his earlier work, *The Nights of Labour* and the now iconic Rancièrian figure of Louis Gabriel Gauny.

⁴⁰ Jacques Rancière. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Gabriel Rockhill (Trans). London & NewYork, Continuum, 2011.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 24

⁴² Jacques Rancière. "Introduction". *Short Voyages to the Land of the People*. James B Swenson (Trans).California, Stanford University Press. 2003.p. 3

⁴³ Ibid., p. 2

These flights, as stated, are spatio-temporal moments of an escape, a fleeing, from prescribed social and perceptual contexts - *le partage du sensible* - and an entry into other worlds. Momentarily, often permanently, either on an individual and/or a collective basis, they can be a migratory or an internal flight 'a system of thought'⁴⁴ but they all entail spatial dimensions, and thus are inherently aesthetic, since they concern the perception of the world. They also can be political, existential or poetic, offering a means of freedom through a displacement and dis-identification, as they disrupt and reconfigure the established social field – the social logic of the distribution of the sensible both materially and symbolically. These escapes can result in a self-imposed marginalization as we see with the character Irene, in Roberto Rossellini's film *Europe 51*, or they can provide moments of auto-emancipation as Gauny experiences them, or they can be the basis of creative freedoms, as will be discussed in chapter four.

Rancière provides a rich and varied account of flights throughout the body of his work; the political and collective with the 'withdrawal of the commoners' – as in the secession of the plebs on the Aventine Hill, the revolt of the Scythian slaves, and the Saint-Simonian voyage to Egypt and their travels around France in the nineteenth century. There are also individual flights: the sailor Claude Genoux writes of labour and alienation whilst on his travels. The creative flights of Albert Rimbaud's life and poems, Rainer Maria Rilke's romantic flight with Marthe, the teenage seamstress who herself has crossed the borders of the impossible and learnt to read and write, her intellectual flight. I have named only a few here, but we can see how central flight is to Rancière's philosophy.

The Rancièrian flights discussed here are political, poetic and existential flights of freedom and emancipation (and their opposite) experienced by the worker Louis Gabriel Gauny. Also there is the flight of aspiration and aesthetics in Gustave Flaubert's fictional character Emma Bovary, where her flights, according to Rancière, expose the entangled relations of logos and pathos, which are especially inherent in the aesthetic regime. Rancière discusses these flights using his literarity method, (as in his writings on Jacotot), where it was used as a strategy of equality: here we see it revealing 'relations between words and things that reconfigure the sensory field of experience and most especially *social* experience'.⁴⁵ What this *indisciplinarity** does is not only bring to life the crucial, yet forgotten moments in history, but also to make equal all forms of topics, bodies and objects in its expression. This Rancièrian form of expression defines the new power of literature that occurs in the aesthetic regime, the new distribution of the sensible. Now the modern subject is a literary subject, allowing anyone who can speak to speak about anything, in any style, and to anyone. In the case of Rancière, with his voice intermingling with the subject, I suggest is a literary flight for Rancière as well as for the reader.

⁴⁴ Rancière. "The Janus-Face of Politicized Art: ²² Jacques Rancière in Interview with Gabriel Rockhill. Historical and Hermeneutic Methodology". *The Politics of Aesthetics*. p. 50

⁴⁵ Alison Ross. "Expressivity, literarity, mute speech". *Key Concepts*. p.13

* Rancière's term for crossing the borders of academic divisions.

One of the most well-known figures to emerge from Rancière's days in the archives is the nineteenth century floor-layer and factory worker, Louis Gabriel Gauny. In the book *Nights of Labour* we see Rancière re-activate Gauny's extraordinary writing, which expressively documents the hourly, daily, drudgery of manual labour always accompanied by his flights of imagination and reverie, leading to a place of contentment. For Rancière, Gauny's writings are a radicalization of the problem, the conditions of nineteenth century manual labour, *le partage*, an exaggeration of the dilemmas as a means of identifying 'the countless unfortunates who, like him, live off a work ravaged by the old world'.⁴⁶ According to Rancière, Gauny's double life in the factory (labour and flight) is the double relationship of proletariat labour: firstly, life of abstracted labour and the concrete world of material necessity – means and ends – and secondly, the world of his wandering mind. Gauny knows his wandering mind is dangerous; not only do these flights of reverie subvert the process of production but also these moments of freedom undermine the hierarchical relationship of boss and worker – master and slave. Gauny's existential flights are a reconfiguring of the perceptual conditions laid out by *le partage* and these flights, intellectual, creative, ethical and political are his dissensus and his emancipation.

Gauny's strategic moments of self-emancipation were a tactical releasing of mind and body from the torments of work, the factory master, and the confines of the bourgeois interior. These flights were a departure from the dominant *partage* to other places and other identities, a 'disturb[ing of] the distribution of the faculties necessitated by the world of work'.⁴⁷ As Rancière claims, this aesthetic suspension – flight – is where 'the divorce between the laboring arms and the distracted gaze introduces the body of the worker into a new configuration of the sensible; it overthrows the 'right' relationship between what the body 'can' do and what it cannot'.⁴⁸ This is the 'double-life of the worker'⁴⁹ – Gauny's life – with his systematic interruptions from productive labour to the non-productive world of flights where he reformulates the world, his world, by crossing borders into the impossible; the un-prescribed landscape of the proletariat – thought and aesthetics. Gauny refuses to succumb to the exhaustion of the day's labour and spends his evenings writing and philosophizing for the workers' journals of the day. Gauny's intellectual flight at night was the 'breaking of his condition'.⁵⁰

Rancière takes us back to Gauny's childhood, the poor *gamin* of the Faubourg St Marcel, because here we see the moment where Gauny's world opens up to culture, literature and the possibility of intellectual flight – emancipation. While lazing under shady trees Gauny dreams

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Tanke. "Lessons on Philosopher-Kings". *Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p. 27

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 27-29

⁴⁹ Donald Reid. "Introduction". *Jacques Rancière. Proletarian Nights, The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth Century France*. London and New York, Verso, 2012. xxxi

⁵⁰ Rancière. "Afterword The Method of Equality: An Answer to Some Questions". *History, Politics Aesthetics*. p. 278

of learning; the wind, sunlight and leaves made him curious about the world of botany. The chance meeting with a friend's mother when they talked about an unread book led to Gauny's world breaking open. Childhood games ceased and the quest to start his own library began. The library grew a page at a time from papers saved from old books and newspapers, and words printed on sacks wrapped around the supply of grains, sugar and coffee that his mother would bring home daily. Gauny recounts: 'How great was my enthusiasm that evening back home as I explored those treasures of fragmentary discourse and annal remnants'.⁵¹ The precocious child had procured a way into the world of words:

When I became an adolescent, circumstances plunged me into a world turned upside down. Tormented by convulsion, my heart was seized with regular fits of rage...I came to know vengeance as I underwent the miseries and humiliations of a monotonous novitiate. I was in revolt. My flesh trembled, my eyes were wild. I was ferocious.⁵²

From Rancière's retelling of Gauny's days in the factory we see his misery at leaving his own world of learning, the space and time of his own intellectual flight, to become one of the many surplus labourers of the French labour force in the 1830s - *le partarge* - with opportunistic employers manipulating the surplus labour market. Subjective relations were transformed under the rules of market capitalism. Gauny's removal from his youthful joy, intellectual pursuits and freedom, to the competitive world of exploitation, was an enforced - expected - separation of mind and body. Gauny's story is not the romantic story of the heroic labourer and the dignity of work, nor pride in the skill of the artisan: his writings describe a trapped, animalistic and suffocating⁵³ existence. Rancière's archaeology reveals that an ever-resistant Gauny 'decided to make his precariousness a source of liberation',⁵⁴ the liberation of a wandering mind. He reversed the situation, turning it into a space-time of flight, both intellectual and imaginative, and this was his means of emancipation. His earlier encounter with the Saint Simonians (a *mixed scene** of bourgeois intellectuals and worker), inspired Gauny with a vision of existential freedom, of finding moments to escape from the alienating, monotonous perceptual world of labour into an aesthetic world - a flight into literature - of thinker, writer and of being. In the *The Nights of Labour*, Rancière's revitalization of Gauny relays the latter's day-to-day account of work and thoughts, and his subsequent soulful writings about them. Rancière's writings convey an admiration and understanding of Gauny as he interweaves his philosophical musings with Gauny's reflections. Rancière defines Gauny's legacy as 'exceptional in that he does give us an hour-by-hour description of his workday'⁵⁵ and his associated thoughts. Gauny's flights, during his day of labour, are interspersed with

⁵¹ Gabriel to Louis, Fonds Gauny, Ms 112. See Rancière (ed.), *Le philosophe plébéin*, p.28, n.1.

Rancière. "PART 1: THE MAN IN THE LEATHER APRON. The New Babylon" *Proletarian Nights*. p. 50

⁵² Gauny to Retouret, July 24, 1832, Fonds Gauny, Ms 165; in Rancière(ed.), *Le philosophe plébéin*, p.162. Rancière. "The New Babylon". *Proletarian Nights*. p. 52

⁵³ Rancière. "The New Babylon". *Proletarian Nights*. p. 54

⁵⁴ Reid. "Introduction". *Proletarian Nights*. xxxi

* This is similar to inidisciplinarity although this can occur outside academic circles, in other words, in the terms of the people.

⁵⁵ Rancière. "The New Babylon". *Proletarian Nights*. p. 54

Rancière's writings, and all things become aligned - labour, the writings and flights of the labourer and the thoughts of the philosopher. Gauny's diary, his writings, reconfigure perceptions of proletariat capabilities and empower the day-dream, the existential flight, as a means of emancipation.

His day starts at five am, angrily readying himself for work in the mode of 'a singular mien'⁵⁶ to be at the factory door by six am, already contemplating the loss of his soul and the torment of his body for the next ten hours. Rancière defines Gauny's daily labour as an abstraction; energy spent is not about the quality of the work but the necessity to work solely to provide subsistence for oneself - means and ends - 'one divides into two'.⁵⁷ The daily battle begins with a division between body and soul. Gauny, Rancière tells us, feels like a captive victim, oppressed by a master (the factory boss) of another race. Rancière interjects analogously - referring to the Hebrew slave of Babylonia.⁵⁸ Gauny calls this world the upside down world - master-boss, worker-slave - where those who do not labour own the world. Gauny begins the first hour of the working day violently conscientious, working like a machine - a false flight - and focusing on the task at hand, sublimating rage into productive energy, punctuated by glances of hate between idle master and frantic slave.

The beginning of a second flight emerges in the second hour, externalized by vocalization; Gauny hums a song of duplicity, 'a song of rebellion that simulates a fusillade'.⁵⁹ Working like a drunkard, intoxicating himself into oblivion, Gauny tries to blur out the factory, the work and the master. Delirium is his means of escaping this *partage*. His mind races to the coming hour of rest, anticipating the break that holds his flight to freedom, his hour of reverie. But each prowling footstep of the master on the factory floor drags Gauny's thoughts away from the dream of the promised land: even the thought of freedom is reined in by the master. 'Often a job difficulty skillfully overcome distracts him a bit and breaks up the long stretch of time',⁶⁰ this small moment of relief, using one's mind to fix a problem, is not the mind that Gauny desires. This intellectual flight still works in the boss's favour for he profits from Gauny's skill and, more importantly, reinforces the worker's alienation. Even Gauny's desire to share this resolution with his fellow workers gives no satisfaction; their fear of the boss's attention puts a stop to his pleasure and he returns to 'the productive frenzy of the insurgent slave'.⁶¹

A high factory window gives Gauny an escape: the view to the sky and the freedom of the passing birds, the fluttering leaves of the poplar tree allow his mind to take flight, even if only in envy:

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 51

⁵⁷ Rancière. "PART 1: THE MAN IN THE LEATHER APRON. The Gate of Heaven" *Proletarian Nights*. p. 24

⁵⁸ Rancière. "The New Babylon". *Proletarian Nights*. pp. 59-60

⁵⁹ Gauny- "Le travail attrayant, 'L'Atelier, June 1842, p. 40. Rancière. "The New Babylon". *Proletarian Nights*. p. 61

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 62

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 63

He covets the vegetative existence of the tree and would gladly bury himself in its bark to avoid further suffering. A few ravens are just passing. He dreams of the vast perspective which they command and of which he is deprived. He sees the beautiful countryside toward which they are flying. In his delirium he envies those free birds living by the laws of God and would like to descend from human being to animal.⁶²

Rancière describes the space and time of the factory that has made possible this flight:

He comes back to the wood and tackles it once more; back to the comparisons he makes “in spite of himself”; back to the torture of his body suffocating from the dust of wood shavings, and the curses it evokes from him; back to the cramped, narrow space between workbenches and curses it prompts.⁶³

Everything has been transformed in this aesthetic spatio-temporal scene in Gauny’s flight of existential freedom. The window is an aperture of reversal, magnifying the structure of his slavery. His captive body finds freedom in the ravens’ view of the landscape. Gauny distances himself from the bondage of timber, of labour, into the womb of the wood of the poplar. The soul can breathe air free of suffering. All the distributions of the sensible have been re-configured into other ways of being. Life has doubled up with the inversion of the sensible, until the master captures Gauny’s thoughts, his wandering mind, and brings him back to earth – work - and ‘everything becomes hateful to him; his master and everything else!’⁶⁴

There is the delirium of the fifth hour, both labour and the punctuated rhythm of half a divided day: production oblivion - unproductive reverie. Lunch hour and Gauny’s life lightens, he contemplates a world put right, an overturning of the upside-down world. This time the flight is political; he is an apostle of rebellion, telling his fellow workers of their working rights and correct remuneration. He feels a sense of unity amongst the workers, a sense of a new age. The factory bell rings and optimism is cut short, reigned in. On returning to the factory:

The solitude of the worker...his suffering in the workshop is now redoubled by thoughts of a world outside—not the place of escape, but a place where the encirclement of work by a working-class society turns the position he would like to flee into a position to be defended.⁶⁵

At the door he sees the faces of surplus labour, men awaiting an opportunity to work if there is a vacancy. He must uphold and defend his own servitude against the other who also strives to provide subsistence for himself – means and ends – ‘one divides into two’. Gauny, ashamed of his subordination to the rule he opposes, seeks to find a friendly face amongst the fraternity of

⁶² Gauny- “Le travail attrayant,” *L’Atelier*, June 1842, p. 41. Rancière. “The New Babylon”. *Proletarian Nights*. p. 64

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 65

surplus labour. This is his avowal of mutual love - his first passion - fraternal bonds. Gauny considers even a love for his boss, but realizes that his first passion, fraternal bonds

is incapable of undoing the effects of its frustration, which have hardened into the features of a body docile to work but indocile to love. These are the stigmata of a world in which the status of every individual is so defined that every object of love is a subject of exploitation.⁶⁶

Then Gauny's inner turmoil is somewhat reconciled:

When we consider the depravities of the world, a misanthropy often takes hold of our hearts, a need for solitude makes us long for desert places; but there is no one to save in the desert.⁶⁷

Gauny's thoughts circle between love for his brother and hatred for the exploitation of production. He awaits the last hours; these are the most terrible. As he sums up all the other hours his soul is eroded as he counts the minutes to the end of his factory day: 'The bell finally sounds, permitting our captive to abandon his out-house of servitude'.⁶⁸

Winter is the off-season for the factory labourer, but for Gauny this season of unemployment brings moments of liberation. As Rancière says it is liberation only for those who have already been liberated, a state of mind liberation. Gauny, knowing 'the tool is the minimal precondition if the proletarian is to have any independence',⁶⁹ becomes a jobber, a marginal insider, a floor-layer. He flees the workshop but it does not lead him to a better place. The work is competitive and the risks are high under an entrepreneur whose financial concerns with relation to productive labour favour the client, not the worker – another *partage*. The floor-laying work takes him to the almost completed residences of the bourgeois. All the other trades have left, their jobs done; the last structural job is Gauny's. He is alone, away from the crowded factory to a vacant shell. Here the aesthetic suspension is not so much of time and place but a suspension from the other. He is an independent man; his love for the other is now at a distance, it is the solitude of desert places. Being alone has 'both the semblance of his ownership and the reality of his liberty'.⁷⁰ Time is now reversed, 'he does not dread the abhorrent gaze of the master'.⁷¹ Work seems enjoyable in itself. Time moves quickly in this unfinished room. Labour is not servitude but freedom. Here, for a moment, Gauny is the master of his own time and the owner of his own space. Independent work is a pleasurable flight for Gauny.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 66

⁶⁷ Louis Gabriel Gauny, "Opinions", *La Ruche populaire*, April 1841. Rancière. "PART 1: THE MAN IN THE LEATHER APRON. The Morning Star". *Proletarian Nights*. p. 99

⁶⁸ Rancière-Gauny. Gauny "Le travail à la journée," in Rancière (ed.), *Le philosophe plébéien*. *Proletarian Nights*. p. 67

⁶⁹ Rancière. "PART 1: THE MAN IN THE LEATHER APRON. Circuits Rounds and Spirals" *Proletarian Nights*. p. 78

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 79

⁷¹ Gauny, "Le Travail à la tâche," Fonds Gauny, MS.134; in Rancière (ed.), *Le philosophe plébéien*, p.45 "Circuits Rounds and Spirals". *Proletarian Nights*. p. 79

It is the space of a nineteenth century Parisian bourgeois interior: large volumes and lofty ceilings, decorative mouldings and panels, light and symmetry. It has all the sensibilities of the bourgeois idea of self – ideas, culture and taste; precisely a space of *le partage*, a space of deep inequitable distributions. ‘Better than a mirror the soul of the floor-layer reflects the sights around him’⁷² - the space is a system of distributions, perceptual f-actualities that propel Gauny into flight, it offers subjective moments and perceptions of otherness:

Believing himself at home, he loves the arrangement of a room so long as he has not finished laying the floor. If the window opens out on a garden or commands a view of a picturesque horizon, he stops his arms a moment and glides in imagination toward the spacious view to enjoy it better than the possessors of the neighbouring residences.⁷³

Windows and nature are a reoccurring theme, portals to another world, views to Gauny’s childhood fascination, a flight of memory, with botany and a nature seemingly free of the social field. But this nature too expresses the *partage* - the logos - a stylistically cultivated landscape and the picturesque taste of bourgeois nineteenth century Paris. Gauny’s flight, this aesthetic suspension, is autonomy and heteronomy – interiority - or as Rancière says, ‘makes outside inside’.⁷⁴

The dead time of unemployment is a time of dreaming and gazing for Gauny. It is a time to wander the streets of Paris, to search for work and, like the flight of a tourist, intoxicated with liberty. This wandering is usually the leisure afforded to the bourgeois to enjoy the world around them, to philosophize. Although, for Gauny, who is not of the dandy class, ‘when one disposes of oneself in absolute independence, one must walk from morning to night’.⁷⁵ This flight of liberty into the streets is also a creative space and time – a creative flight for Gauny. His independence is his own creation of systems, his *cenobitic economy*, a science to manage the incomes of the rebel workers, and the re-organizing of city spaces – an undoing and re-doing of *le partage*. As Rancière remarks, Gauny’s meanderings are ‘no longer punctuated by the anxiety of seeking work but pointed toward everything in the stage-décor of the city or the physiognomy of its actors’.⁷⁶ This flight is an intellectual and creative flight, an escape from his life to an imagining of the creation of other places. Gauny writes:

He imagines, plans, makes suggestions to himself. He pries into every possible corner, traverses the streets, the alleys, and the crossroads. As he scrutinizes the structures of the most sumptuous neighbourhoods or strays off on the loneliest circuit rounds, his gaze has the keenness of a

⁷² Ibid., p. 81

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Rancière. “Afterword The Method of Equality: An Answer to Some Questions”. *History, Politics, Aesthetics*. p. 286

⁷⁵ Gauny, “Économie cénobitique,” Fonds, Gauny, Ms 151; extracts in Rancière 9ed.), *Le philosophe plebeian*, pp.111. Rancière. “Circuits Rounds and Spirals”. *Proletarian Nights*. p. 84

⁷⁶ Rancière. “Circuits Rounds and Spirals” *Proletarian Nights*. p. 85

bird of prey without food...[w]ith a circular glance he takes in everything: the monuments and the prisons, the tumultuous city and its ramparts, the wisps of umbrage beyond the walls and the venturesome clouds in the infinite atmosphere.⁷⁷

Then Gauny returns to factory work, his customary labour and, at a window - his empire - where he gazes on an 'ideal sky',⁷⁸ and finds it blotted, blighted, by two dark forms. One is a factory and the other a cellular prison, the new sensible demonstrating 'the spirit of enterprise and the spirit of reform'.⁷⁹ Gauny's fixation on the prison and those inmates who have lost their 'pathway to liberty...those who shake themselves free of the common discipline',⁸⁰ impels him toward flight; this time for the other, the fraternity of rebels. What occurs on the other side of this model prison wall is of great interest to him and he organizes, through informal means, a personal tour of the institution. Gauny's evocative description of the architecture infects the reader; he imagines himself as the other, the prisoner. This panopticon is an 'immense tomb...[that] buries voice and life without killing'.⁸¹ The walls construct a space of dead air and dead sound, the very opposite of flight. This particular distribution of the sensible is the perceptual realm of absolute stultification. It is not enough that the apparatus of the panopticon encloses the prisoners under the constant gaze of the unseen jailers but that the materials used and their impregnable junctions that reinforce this prison of no escape, with no leakage of light, air, body, soul and spirit. It is a place of psychological, physical and sensory torture, an authoritarian will and an architectural exercise of surveillance that constructs a space permitting no imaginary fleeing. As Rancière describes it:

This cellular architecture effects this new torture: a prison where the nooks and crannies offer no shadows, where no obscurity permits mediation to escape, where no complicity is exchanged or purchased, where no chance allows for the enjoyment, even the futile enjoyment, of hope - a world without fissures or interstices through which liberty, or merely a dream of it, could pass.⁸²

This panopticon - a specific partition of the *partage* - announces the connection between flights and freedom: to deny flight, even imaginary, is to deny freedom.

While in the panoptican prison he thinks of his brothers who have no means of physical or imaginary escape, Gauny - the man of dreams forever seeking a portal to fly through - feels the rage and sees the situation in its entirety - a *partage* of absolute domination:

⁷⁷ Gauny, "Le Travail à la tâche," in Rancière (ed.), *Le philosophe plébéien*, pp.46-47 "Circuits Rounds and Spirals" *Proletarian Nights*. p. 85

⁷⁸ Rancière. "Revisiting Nights of Labour" Part 2 - youtube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tn4014XpBwc>

⁷⁹ Rancière. "Circuits Rounds and Spirals". *Proletarian Nights*. p. 87

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 87-88

⁸¹ Gauny, "Aux ouvriers constructeurs de prisons cellulaires," Fonds, Gauny, Ms.116; in Rancière (ed.), *Le philosophe plébéien* p.72 73 75 "Circuits Rounds and Spirals". *Proletarian Nights*. p. 89

⁸² Rancière. "Circuits Rounds and Spirals". *Proletarian Nights*. p.90

Every layer of stone they lay is an outrage against humanity, one more weight thrown on the deafness of their conscience. They build these hideous cells against themselves, for it is their race that feeds the monster. The inequality of conditions, long-term unemployment, the repugnance aroused by a job that is too exploitative or against our tastes, the absence of education, an extortion, a comparison, a vertigo: sometimes these things make the weakest and the strongest of the common people wage war against the society that disinherits them in their mother's womb and forbids them to live in the full employment of their faculties.⁸³

Rancière's revival, adaptation and extension of Gauny's texts and thoughts, exposes the self-emancipatory and marginality of Gauny's fleeing from his immediate world - the old world of *le partage* - and in each case these flights hold political, existential, creative and ethical meanings. The spatiality and temporality of the distribution of the sensible, and the associated disengagement of it through Gauny's practice of flight, is an aesthetic suspension – an experience itself. It is Gauny's resistance to reality that permits him other perceptions and other realms of being. These emancipatory moments Gauny makes clear are not dependent on material privilege but precisely the *contraire*, it is the experience of a life without privilege, a life in need of otherness. What becomes central to Rancière's exposition of Gauny is the existential account of flight, its availability under forces of domination and without the benefit of material privilege.

Gustave Flaubert – Madame Bovary

Rancière's reading of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and his analysis, *Why Emma Bovary Had to Be Killed*,⁸⁴ demonstrates his complex philosophical vision of how the democratic revolution in France links to new ways of sensing, feeling and material consumption as expressed in the novel. The historical context, central character, and author reveal a series of interconnected flights captured in the literature i.e., social and individual flights of aspiration, sense and imagination. When reading *Bovary* from a Rancièrian perspective, and in the space of flight, the conditions – contradictions – inherent in the aesthetic regime become apparent. These flights expose a hermeneutic space that operates between the dichotomy of logos and pathos. Hence flights are both a making and a breaking of the knots that define Flaubert's *Bovary* and their place in the aesthetic regime.

Rancière assigns a central role to Flaubert's novel in terms of its literary effect, as an exemplar of the aesthetic regime. *Madame Bovary*'s literary effect is one of literary equality. Alison Ross

⁸³ Gauny, "Aux ouvriers constructeurs de prisons cellulaires," Fonds, Gauny, Ms.116; in Rancière 9ed.), *Le philosophe plebeian* pp.67-68 Rancière "Circuits Rounds and Spirals". *Proletarian Nights*. p.90

⁸⁴ Jacques Rancière. "Why Emma Bovary Had to Be Killed". *Critical Inquiry* 34. (Winter 2008). Q 2008 by The University of Chicago. 0093-1896/08.3042-0005\$10.00.All rights reserved.

describes it as a 'democratic field of sensory experience',⁸⁵ an equality where the distribution of the sensible is experienced from other perceptions. Rancière defines it as an aesthetic-politics,

political forces that seize upon a description of the world...[it is a] literature that operates by reconfiguring the landscape of what can be seen and said by constructing new individualities and a world for these individualities; and this construction of a politics peculiar to literature follows its own logic.⁸⁶

The literary style of Flaubert's *Bovary* is itself a flight, a fleeing from representative descriptions of the world, to a reorganizing of the *partage* into micro-events; these types of flight are the defining features, indeed the aesthetic 'plot' as Rancière's interprets it, and this in itself reveals a part of the knot of modern aesthetics.

Rancière claims the nineteenth century novel is a radical departure – a rupture,

literature has significantly developed the space or field of what is of interest to it and hence the field of subjects worthy of interest, of subjects capable of thinking and feeling. Basically, that's what novelistic modernity is: a significant extension of what bodies are capable of feeling, experiencing, speaking, saying...[s]o literature expands the world of possible experience accessible to anyone. This permits the borrowings and appropriations whereby people excluded from public discourse declared and demonstrated themselves capable of intervening in it...Literature's impact on the formation of new forms of political subjectivation operates through the effect of a blurring between domains...which is also an effect of distributions of the sensible.⁸⁷

Rancière cites *Madame Bovary* as 'novelistic modernity...literary democracy'⁸⁸ where we see the crossing of borders – flight - where all subjects are equal to others, both animate and inanimate. There is no separation between 'the realm of poetry and the realm of prosaic life...subject matter is equal to any other...no border between what belongs to art and what belongs to nonartistic life',⁸⁹ hence a democratic equality. For Rancière the main events of the novel are the effervescent descriptions showing the sensorium of the everyday as a sensuous pleasure, thus turning the supposedly ordinary into a flight. These aesthetic flights are those of author, subject, and presumably the reader.

The space and time of Flaubert's *Bovary* is as much the making of the novel as is the main subject, Emma. Rancière describes this epoch as one of excitement. This episode of excitement is a frenzied societal flight, and a reconfiguring of a new distribution of the sensible, replacing

⁸⁵ Alison Ross. "Equality in the Romantic Arts Form: The Hegelian Background to Jacques Rancière's Aesthetic Revolution". Jean-Philippe Deranty and Alison Ross (Eds). *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene. The Philosophy of Radical Equality*. London and New York, Continuum. 2012. p. 94

⁸⁶ "Jacques Rancière and Indisciplinarity". Gregory Elliot (Trans). *Art&Research, A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*. Volume 2. No.1. Summer 2008. ISSN 1752-6388. p. 4

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Rancière. "Why Emma Bovary Had to Be Killed". p. 237

the old world order of established hierarchy; the hierarchy that placed and maintained people within a perceptual and material world of limited horizons. This new sensible of excitement – modernity – and its network of commerce, sold dreams and aspirations; a manufactured desire was made ‘available everywhere to anybody’⁹⁰ because of the surfeit of commodities. Rancière’s poetry of the prosaic describes the new social order as a collective flight:

Society had become a hustle and bustle of free equal individuals that were dragged together into a ceaseless whirl in search of an excitement that was nothing but the mere internalization of the endless and purposeless agitation of the whole social body.⁹¹

Modernity, he says, released a sense of will associated with the will of wanting and this in turn released a new form of flight – anxiety – based on the capacity to satisfy such wants. This excitement, Rancière tells us, was synonymous with democracy; and this ideal of democracy had its roots in the rupture of the 1789 Revolution. The moment of free equal citizens – eventually overturned by the reign of the new emperor – made the political significance of the Revolution invalid thereafter; it lived only in the idea of a mere social phenomenon. By the nineteenth century this excitement was transmuted into a multitude of aspirations, individual pleasures and desires and, of course, the great democracy of consumer choice. This type of democracy could not, would not, be overturned by military force.

According to Rancière, this type of democracy was not new to the West. Plato’s democracy was not a form of government but a way of life; one’s life is nothing but individual pleasure. This democracy of pleasure is not the democracy of dissensus (politics), it is the aesthetic-politics that Rancière defines. The idea of individual pleasure as a sensuous flight realised in material terms and its link to democracy becomes apparent when I discuss the aestheticized life in chapter four. For Rancière the antidemocrats⁹² – the old order – viewed this new sensible of individual pleasure as an uprising formulated by,

a multitude of unleashed social atoms, greedy to enjoy everything that was enjoyable: gold, indeed, and all the things that gold can buy, but also, what was worse, all that gold cannot buy passions, values, ideals, arts and literature. It would be a lesser evil if poor people only wanted to get rich. Poor people are supposed to be practically minded. But poor people were now taking a new view of what practical-mindedness meant. They wanted to enjoy all that was enjoyable, including ideal pleasures. But they also wanted those ideal pleasures to be practically enjoyable pleasures.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 235

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., p. 236

⁹³ Ibid., p. 236

The world of Emma Bovary is the world of an uprising, a flight of the people opposing the old *partage* where pleasure was the pastime of the hierarchy. This new world of excitement was the people's world of real pleasure as a form of practical everydayness. For Rancière, Emma represents the new configuration of the distribution of the sensible. He defines Emma as the 'heroine of a certain aesthetic democracy',⁹⁴ and 'the literary equivalent of working-class emancipation'⁹⁵ in that she symbolizes the new democratic aesthetics of art, culture and ideas – real pleasures – domesticated as nonart and available to everyone.

There are other aspects of flight woven into Rancière's analysis of the novel which he describes as polemical.⁹⁶ The first polemic is between character and subject. Rancière, claims that Emma's character is constructed as oppositional to Flaubert's character; she defines what he believes he is not. 'One divides into two', Emma is a space of opposition for Flaubert, expressed not only as a creative flight but also as one character value. The novel itself is Flaubert's flight of coupling and uncoupling himself from Emma. This has a pathological effect in relation to a literary context, Rancière suggests. This exposes two strains of the same condition of modernity, (a) the anxiety of contradictions now available within this new partition of the *partage* (which Flaubert resolves for himself by the killing off of Emma) and, (b) Flaubert's interweaving of a fictional character into the real social field. This, arguably, creates a literature mistaken for life; exactly the sin he accuses Emma Bovary of.

The second polemic, expressed through the idea of aesthetic suspension, is Flaubert's struggle (symbolic of the old hierarchical *partage*) between art as an autonomous entity and nonart; the aesthetization of life. The placing of a fictional character into the f-actuality of the social field of nineteenth century France holds no interest for Flaubert. The aristocratically-mannered Flaubert's only concern is art, which stands at a distance from the everyday: the old hierarchical regime of representative aesthetics. Emma, however, represents the emergence of the new aestheticized individual whose life encapsulates the new excitement of modernity: aspirational and a life decorated and defined by the possession of objects of desire. Rancière argues that Flaubert wants to untie the knot that links artistic equality to the new description of the sensible, that makes ideal pleasures available to everyone. In other words, Flaubert believes there is a 'correct' place for the experience of the aesthetic suspension – flight.

Flaubert's construction of Emma's aestheticized life is based on his account that this aestheticized life is a disease affecting pure art. He demonizes Emma for this: art as decorative décor is a corruption of the arts. The moments of sensation, flights, which she feels for the furniture in her life should only relate to art. Flaubert mocks her; domestic art is kitsch – it is art minuterized and reproduced. Judgments of high art and low art now prevail

⁹⁴ Rancière. "The Janus-Face of Politicized Art: 22 Jacques Rancière in Interview with Gabriel Rockhill. Historical and Hermeneutic Methodology". *The Politics of Aesthetics*. p. 56

⁹⁵ Rancière. "Jacques Rancière and Indisciplinarity". *Art&Research*. p. 4

⁹⁶ "Jacques Rancière and the (Re) Distribution of the Sensible: Five Lessons." pp. 8-9

in the modern art *partage*. Rancière explains kitsch is not vulgar out of date art, but the art available to the poor, the art 'that aesthetes have already rejected'.⁹⁷ This is the flight of art itself, fleeing from galleries and the salons of the wealthy to the homes of the poor. Thus he claims Madame Bovary is the first anti-kitsch manifesto. It becomes clear here how Flaubert needed Emma as a means of defining himself and his aesthetic character. Here lies the paradox: Flaubert's novelistic modernity, his democratic literature, is his unconscious production of the knot Rancière claims is inherent in the aesthetic regime – a blurring of distinctions between the realms of poetry and prosaic life. Not only does Flaubert's writing embody the democratic equality of one subject with another subject - the animate with the inanimate - but also his literary style opens up a new field of experience, a new literary *partage*. The 'new' literary technique employed in Madame Bovary is a flight of democratic aesthetics.

In terms of Rancière's regimes of the arts, and as he points out, Emma's account of an aestheticized life is bound by the same knot as is Flaubert's literary democracy in relation to his aesthetic values. Emma's aesthetic value, as she understands it, is in terms of the old *partage*, the representative regime. The objects with which she surrounds herself are not just her sensations solidified into concrete form, but are the materialization of her desire to live an aristocratic life. Emma's flight of upward social mobility represents her cultural desire to be in a particular place that allows – expects – a way of thinking and speaking, therefore a certain capacity of experience; a particular partition of *le partage*. Her flight from country farm girl and all the perceptual fields and social relations of domination aligned with it, is precisely the actual social field that Flaubert sweeps away under the rubric of fiction. She yearns for a life of concrete pleasures, décor, ideal romance together with physical love and independence; the real and imagined world of bourgeois women. As Rancière says, her flight was 'the deadly pursuit of what is meant by words such as bliss, felicity, or ecstasy'.⁹⁸

Emma's character, Rancière continues, is not as contradictory as Flaubert constructs it. Her character, both sentimental and practically minded, is one and the same for Rancière; the pleasures of art and literature are concrete pleasure, a style of life that permeates every aspect of her life. Her life, which is a negotiation between sources of excitement and her romantic disappointments, is rewarded with the purchase of high-end furniture. Rancière's equation of this to democratic understanding is enlightening, 'this is what respectable persons perceive as the law of democracy, the law of universal equivalence: anyone can exchange any desire for any other desire'.⁹⁹ Rancière points out, that Flaubert is also caught up in the new laws of democracy, of desire exchange, as well as the need – because of disappointment - to aestheticize his life. Flaubert, in a letter sent to his friend Louise Colet, discusses the need to have beauty compensate for his literary frustrations, 'his own dream of

⁹⁷ Rancière. "Why Emma Bovary Had to Be Killed". p. 240

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 245

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 236

a dwelling in marble halls, reclining humming bird feather divans, and enjoying swansdown carpets, ebony chairs and tortoise-shell floors'.¹⁰⁰ Thus his flight into an interior life of decorative pleasure echoes Emma's.

In Emma's childhood we see her first sensuous experience of flight when the experience of a religious Mass opened her world of aesthetic suspension. The light in the chapel, the religious images, frankincense and the coolness of the holy water induced a mystic languor. This ephemeral experience is what Emma ultimately wanted to capture in her own material world – a pathos into logos, sensation into a sense-making. This, for Flaubert, is her undoing. Although this sensorium splendour, Rancière believes, was instead Emma's undoing of the religious event: the disconnecting of the function, the story, and the property of things into becoming her 'absolute manner of seeing things'. Her seeing was not the hierarchical order of Catholicism but the non-order of sensations.

Romance, for Emma, is experienced as a flight into nature; and this is Flaubert's aesthetic suspension in the realm of literary equality. We see gold in the eyes of Rudolph; his presence provides the perfume of lemon and vanilla and, for Leon, sunshine, water and bubbles. It is also the character distinctions (nature and purity) we see in the representative regime: 'This is what the characters feel and what makes them happy: a pure flood of sensations'.¹⁰¹ Rancière defines the knot here between the regimes: 'Flaubert can make art out of the life of a farmer's daughter to the extent that the farmer's daughter can make art of her life and life out of his art'.¹⁰² Each flight pulls the knot tighter.

Flaubert's lesson, according to Rancière, is the one that the Devil knows how best to teach. The Devil, a master of flight himself, had already taught Flaubert 'what life truly is when our sensations are released from the chains of individuality'.¹⁰³ The Devil in Flaubert's *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, takes the saint on,

an aerial journey through space...[he] could discover strange forms of preindividual or impersonal life: inanimate existences, inert things that seem animal, vegetative souls, statues that dream landscapes that think.¹⁰⁴ In such a world our mind loses all its conventional bearings. It bursts into atoms of thoughts that come into unity with things that have themselves burst into a dance of atoms. The Devil reminded the saint that he had already felt that experience of fusion between the inside and the outside.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 240

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 242

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 238

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 241

¹⁰⁴ Flaubert, *La Tentation de saint Antoine*, (Paris, 1910) p.418. Rancière. "Why Emma Bovary Had to Be Killed". p. 241

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

The Devil's flight teaches us that flight as pure sensation, pathos, is without attachment to meanings of self and individual understandings. Rather, the mystic languor is to disconnect these sensations from any function, which, in turn, Flaubert failed to teach the adult Emma; that to enjoy sensation as pure sensation it must be disconnected from the sensorium of ordinary experience. Flights of pure sensation must remain just that, a pathos without a logos. But Emma had met the Devil in church as a child, when she disconnected the logos of her Catholicism with the pathos of the religious ritual. I suggest this was not the first time the Devil, the master of flight, had been to church; he had been there two hundred years or so before, he had even designed and decorated it! The *partage* of the Baroque chapel was flight made concrete; pathos to a *partage* of logos and back to pathos. This conversion of appearance, from the Reformation to the Counter Reformation, art historian Anthony Blunt defined as necessary because:

The spirit demanded a new style [Baroque] demanded ...new formulas: swirling compositions, warm seductive colouring, figures in strong movement, dramatic gestures, and a whole apparatus of clouds, putti and radiances...aimed at arousing astonishment, at creating strongly emotional effects, at imposing them instantaneously, even abruptly, on their audience.¹⁰⁶

This flight of pathos - excitement and rapture - attached to the logos of religion, was for the parishioner, an experience of fusion between the inside and the outside, an interiority of both the personal and impersonal. Art was fusing with moments of life, sanctified as a momentary spectacle. The knots between pathos and logos had already been tied.

Returning to Flaubert and Emma Bovary, Rancière states that, 'The decisive events of Madame Bovary are made of such relations of movement and rest'.¹⁰⁷ Bovary is a book of flight and rest, and this rest resulting from flight opens up an 'absolute manner of seeing things' space that operates between the dichotomy of logos and pathos. This new spatio-temporal paradigm of altered perceptions, becomes an 'hermeneutic space [of] interpretive practice',¹⁰⁸ capable of reconfiguring the knot of the aesthetic regime. This space-time I call interval and is the focus of the next chapter.

As I have demonstrated, Rancière's reading of Madame Bovary reveals a series of interconnected flights. Firstly, the literature is a flight of literary equality where the sensible mode of experience is itself the plot. Secondly, the subject (Emma's life) is a continuum of flight, social aspirations, romances and an everyday experience of practical pleasures. Thirdly, there is Flaubert's creative flight - the book itself - and also Emma as his alter ego,

¹⁰⁶ Anthony Blunt. "Introduction". *Baroque and Rococo, Architecture and Decoration*. New York, Harper and Row, New York. 1978. pp. 9-19

¹⁰⁷ Rancière. "Why Emma Bovary Had to Be Killed". p. 243

¹⁰⁸ Jacques Rancière. *The Aesthetic Unconscious*. Reviewed by Owen Hulatt. Marx and Philosophy. Review of Books. Marxandphilosophy.org.uk/reviewofbooks/reviews/2010/150

which Ranciere defines as a form of literary's 'healthy schizophrenia'.¹⁰⁹ Fourthly, there is the Devil, who teaches us the moral of flight. Finally, Rancière's conceptual aesthetic-politic analysis surrounds the reading of this book and opens up questions in terms of the relation of flights to logos and pathos.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 248

CHAPTER THREE. Intervals

Gesture

As stated in the previous chapter, Rancière proposes a spatio-temporal moment, a hermeneutic space and an interpretive practice that operates within the workings of the logos-pathos distinction. It seems that this space, itself a tension of the aesthetic-politic, produces a knot that defines conditions of the modern aesthetic regime. I interpret Rancière's momentary aspect of the gesture as such a place. In his book *Short Voyages to the Land of the People*, Rancière discusses the aesthetic-politic of the gesture as a certain partition of the *partage*. The gestures examined here (of Irene and Michelet) reveal simultaneous acts of a momentary declaration of equality, which is itself enclosed in a history of a social hierarchy inscribed in the perceptual worlds of body, behavior and emotion – it is a knotted aesthetic experience. The socio-historically defined gesture makes visible the terms of relational relations with the other. The lesson of the gesture in *Short Voyages* is that they mark the space at the end of a journey – flight – and signal the next passage of experience. The gesture as a singular action – an episode – defines its own space; it is a space of in-betweenness – between flight and certainty – logos and pathos. In Rancière's analyses of the gesture as a moment in and of itself, I have taken the liberty of interpreting these space-time phenomena as a place I call interval, because it marks an end of a journey and a staging of something to come. From Rancière's writings these gestures – intervals – are local context-driven-moments, affected by the altered perceptions – pathos – of flight that announce new and other moments of action, intentions and desired positions. The interval is an act of will that creates a specific context leading to a new reality – logos. Rancière's examination of the gesture claims it to be a certain shifting of the line that defines a partition of the *partage*; it follows on then that gesture is a claiming of a site – an interval – as a place and time of becoming.

Irene – Europe 51

In *Short Voyages* the chapter “A Child Kills Himself” is Rancière's analysis of Roberto Rossellini's postwar, neorealist film *Europe 51*. This reading has a history itself, occurring over an interval of twenty-five years from Rancière's first viewing in the 1960s, and his second viewing a quarter of a century later. Rancière's re-examination, especially in relation to the gesture, suggests it is imbued with his journey from Althusserian-Marxism to his own philosophical oeuvre of aesthetic-politics.

Rancière tells us, as the title states, this film is about a certain place and time, and within this place is a no place, an atopia, where the main character Irene becomes displaced and marginalized in the form of a ‘going astray’. The plot is a series of ‘events, encounters and

reminiscences'.¹¹⁰ These events of trauma - encounters with the people, speech and a not hearing, the silence of unspeakable grief and the falling into the void - are also the reminiscences of loss. Rancière describes the film as one of silence expressing itself through vision and gesture.

Rancière places the film in its historical ideological mode of cinematic fashion. As the fiction of Flaubert's *Bovary* is surrounded by the space of social reality - although ultimately Flaubert provides a critique rather than a representation - *Europe 51* sits in the aesthetic-politic of the aesthetic regime. It also sits in the aesthetic-politic mode of a Marxist revival together with Semiotics, Structuralist theory, universal narratives, utopian visions and the new wave of cinema. This cinematic new wave, where the camera itself portrays flight, creates a new perceptual experience. Rancière says this,

liberation of the camera...became the witness of a universe in which figures, spaces and codes were joyously cut loose from their moorings: running and sliding, disguises and pantomimes and ludicrous encounters, off screen voices and false match cuts, white painted walls of apartments for young couples and Mediterranean honeymoons.¹¹¹

Rancière's original reading was in the context of reading cinematic realism from the perspective of Althusserian-Marxist scientific observation i.e., 'to pay attention to the simple gestures that are so natural that we neglect to reflect upon them---seeing, hearing, reading, writing'.¹¹²

Irene Girard, played by Ingrid Bergman, is the central character. As the wife of an ambassador she leads a bourgeois life, absorbed in the social niceties befitting her husband's position. It is the 'certainty of the right place',¹¹³ and the 'fantasy of the family romance',¹¹⁴ - the *partage* of her world - that irrupts in the event of the suicide of her son, Michel. Just before Michel dies, he utters on his deathbed. These words, this uttering - gesture - is in the presence of Irene's cousin Andrea: Irene is absent from the event. Although Andrea does not hear the utterance he tells Irene that Michel's words and death are based on the social pain that envelops postwar Italy. Andrea has a purpose: he, the Communist journalist, wants to represent the event to Irene (and the audience) in the space of inequality; the *partage* of what lies behind the production and pleasure of her wealthy bourgeois existence - the plight of the working-class.

Irene's need to find the truth behind the mystery of Michel's words, and the unspeakable guilt she feels, sends her on a voyage under the advice of Andrea - a flight - into the

¹¹⁰ Rancière. "A Child Kills Himself". *Short Voyages*. p. 108

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 131

¹¹² Ibid., p. 118 *from 3*

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 133

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 129

working-class suburbs of Rome. It is, at first, a flight of charity, both ethical and, for herself, one of compensation. Her portrayal of entering into the suburbs is shaped by Rossellini's cinematic technique, according to Rancière. This introduction to the people is a representation of people and place. Irene's flight (arranged according to Andrea and Rossellini's representational code) is both her and our introduction to the working-class suburbs of Rome. We all cross the border into the social reality of what lies behind society, the connection between rich and poor. Rancière recalls the scene...Irene has taken the tram to the other side and has disembarked at the end of the line: the landscape of the working-class suburb is a divided place, on one side the dilapidated apartments and on the other a wasteland next to the river where the children play.¹¹⁵ The people are framed - his photographic enclosure is the necessary representative technique that defines the sensible quality of their condition - crowded together they are solidarity, and Irene the foreigner, is the suspicious outsider. Andrea, her guide, has relations with this place and its people; he takes her to an apartment to see a sick boy who would benefit from Irene's charity. Irene's flight reveals a whole new existence for her; a new perceptual realm that Rancière tells us is one that she could have never imagined. Irene's flight is at once both socio-political and educative as well as a site of displacement for her.

Irene's second flight to the neighbourhood is one she metaphorically and literally never returns from. This time, without her chaperone Andrea, she returns to the apartment to visit the child she has helped financially. Standing at the end of the line, waiting for the tram to return home, the camera focuses on her face turning sideways, gazing into the space off-screen. This space, off-screen and to the side, holds great meaning: it is Rossellini's and Rancière's metaphor - this gaze to the side is the beginning of her voyage into madness. From a Rancièrian perspective this gesture leads to the space outside the logos-pathos dichotomy. Irene follows her gaze to the river, where an event of confusion is taking place; a body is being pulled out of the water while the local children recklessly rush around. Irene gets there in time to stop a boy falling into the river. This act of will, this moving to the side of what she knows - the geography of the place - sets her on a path of disorientation. She has lost her way and cannot find her way back to the tram terminus and thus her way home. Rancière calls this loss, a repetition of the initial event - the rupture. This loss, this being out of place, inaugurated by the gesture of the turned head indicates her descent, her flight into madness. Things make no sense; she has fallen into a void of the unrepresentable,¹¹⁶ a pathos dismissed of any sense of logos. The foreigner wandering confused is, too, an aesthetic suspension, it is amiss of the social polemic that Andrea has represented, there is no front and no back - no what is behind the scene, she has entered a world aside from it. Her way forward out of this flight of a wandering into madness is finally underwritten by her husband: she is assessed - judged - by a psychiatrist, and her future is condemned to an asylum.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 107

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 117. Paraphrase

There is plural significance in the simple gesture. Rancière's first reading of it, framed in the space and time of Althusserian-Marxism, suggests that the:

"Realist" *mise-en-scène* unveiled a determinate world through the sole action of a material system of looks, gestures and actions that lived, focused on, and dreamed that world; an unveiling without mediation, without any significance imposed from the outside, coming to capture the network of gestures in a register of ideological signifieds.¹¹⁷

Thus, at that time the gestures of Irene Ranciere framed as,

the physical evidence of her experience. A bourgeois woman, displaced from her own world, discovered an unknown territory in which she tried to situate herself through a common system of gestures, the gestures of a mother.¹¹⁸

A mother, a saint, of the monarchical order of Christian origin. Rossellini's Catholicism is never out of the frame in Rancière's early reading. However, his re-reading of the role of gesture a twenty-five years later reads differently, it is now spatial. The movement to the side is a deviation, perhaps a resistance, from the invited look to what occurs behind. The space at the side leads to her change of perspective and a different perceptual experience. This space apart (from the front to the back) is a consciousness set aside from a normative consciousness: the fabrications of the networks of representations of reality – logos. Here, I am tempted to add to Rancière's reading by making a place for this setting aside – this in-between. This movement – episode - is Irene's transition toward madness, in that this movement, this shifting line, is the interval prior to her incarceration because of madness. It is the place of the no place, the setting aside, as the site of the moment that puts into question her displacement, her marginalization and her dis-identification.

The other space of the interval is Rancière's account of Irene's right hand gesture. He takes us, as Rossellini does, to the statue of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, in the piazza where Irene and Andrea are having a discussion. Marcus's raised right hand speaks of authority, calm, soldiery, indicating there is something important to be said.¹¹⁹ Rancière calls this gesture one of 'antique simplicity'.¹²⁰ Not only does the gesture have its own history of hierarchy and authority, *partage*, but it also reveals an interval - it speaks of the space in between - the will, the intention, an action desired, a line to be shifted.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.119

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p 126-127. Hyppolite Taine 1886

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.127

From behind the bars of the asylum window Irene gestures, ‘makes a sign’¹²¹ to the people from the working-class suburb who have come to see her. Rancière calls this gesture her benediction: the gesture of Catholic propriety and the saint who, by nature, is set apart – aside from the social – the people. However, this act of Irene’s gesture, which is her willing for peace, signifies her interval. Framed within the bars this benediction is not only for the people but also is her becoming. This is the space in-between her old free wandering life, her bourgeois *partage* and her new life of the institutionalized *partage* - on the inside of the asylum. Her benediction is the interval that marks the end of one journey and the beginning of another

It can be seen, therefore, that Rancière’s account of *Europe 51* follows the aesthetic-politic of flights and gestures, the *partage*, and resistance to it. From Rancière’s perspective it brings to the fore the side space - interval - the space and time partition, the line of the in-between. This is the in-between, between front and back, event and reminiscence, mastery and fragility, journey and destiny - the space between logos and pathos.

Jules Michelet

In “The Petrified Flower” from the chapter “The Poor Woman”, in *Short Voyages*, the focus is on an episode in the life of the nineteenth century French historian Jules Michelet. We see here a series of flights and intervals in his life that revolve around the themes of love, reciprocity, and abandonment. Rancière’s literarity technique of history (genealogical, philosophical, political and poetic), allows him the means of critiquing Michelet’s own account of history i.e., historiography; ‘the meaning of history is *immanent* to history’.¹²² Michelet’s discourse on love is framed in what Rancière defines as an ‘erotics of historical discourse’.¹²³ In this account again one finds an interesting case of the interval.

In his travels to Germany after the death of two previous wives - a flight of grief - Michelet’s interval is to divide his life in two: there is physical love and there are his intellectual endeavours. Singular, romantic love which Michelet has previously acted out in marriage has been abandoned, he ‘separate[d] spiritual fulfillment from the needs of the body’,¹²⁴ Michelet’s interval reads:

At first, along the dusty road, I drew sustenance from the impossible past. Then the desire for living realities, almost equally impossible, came to me and grew within me. Now it is time to pacify this desire in

¹²¹ Ibid., p.127

¹²² Dmitri Nikulin. “The Names in History: Rancière’s New Historical Poetics”. *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene. The Philosophy of Radical Equality*. Pg. 70.

¹²³ Rancière. “The Poor Woman. The Petrified Flower”. *Short Voyages*. Pg.74

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 71

the prose that awaits me and to reinstate the old division: here, the body; there, for books and for the world, the heart.¹²⁵

‘One divides into two’. This interval of division, the line drawn, soon complicates his life. A flight to the *Land of the People*, reawakens his desire for romantic love. His two female servants: ‘Barbara and Rustica do more than assure the material comforts of the household and body: they become initiators’.¹²⁶ Michelet does not confuse the physical love he shares with the women with romantic love, but the question of romantic love enters the frame in the form of these women – these people – as initiators of his historical enterprise. The servants reveal in their stories told to the historian of France – the pedagogue, the man of the people – what he does not know: that the French nation originated in the rustic and barbarian people long before the kings and monks of medieval proprietary.

His encounter with the rustic and barbarian is his education by the people, about the people and for the people. Michelet has an historical renewal and takes flight to fifth century France:

The acquiescent body of the rustic or barbarian is also the subject of history deciphered, the recovered heart of the simple folk that revolutionizes the book. The same subject satisfies the man’s desire and the requirements of the new science.¹²⁷

Michelet’s rustic and barbarian history of France is, according to Dmitri Nikulin in *The Names in History: Rancière’s New Historical Poetics*, a creation of the ‘republican-romantic’.¹²⁸ And for Rancière this republican-romantic is Michelet’s ‘appearance of a new political entity that is at the same time the new object of love, the native land’.¹²⁹

The voices of the servants, the people, disclosing their history and reconfiguring Michelet’s account of French history creates an interval for him: a reciprocity of a love. The historian desires to give back to the people – the ‘lover’ – who gave to him his book. They too must be initiated as they initiated him: ‘This completed union of speech and flesh, this reciprocity of initiation is what is called democracy’.¹³⁰ This democracy is the politic; this gesture of love he states is,

love, education, democracy, in a word, initiation, mean to make their object higher, greater, and more beautiful, to bring it to a higher degree of life...so that the person should grow, not in dependence and to our advantage, but in herself and in her own originality.¹³¹

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 72

¹²⁸ Nikulin. “The Names in History: Rancière’s New Historical Poetics”. *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene. The Philosophy of Radical Equality*. p. 69

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Rancière. “The Petrified Flower”. *Short Voyages*. Pg. 73

¹³¹ Ibid.

This desire to initiate the people, to take the people on a flight of love, beauty and education, will take Michelet a lifetime, and the people many generations. As well, this love as a bridge - the line - to connect the rich and poor, the pedagogue and servant, according to Rancière, has itself a paradoxical history of separation. This love that Michelet understands is what Rancière claims is the erotics of historical discourse, whereby knotted emotions emerge creating meaning. This love from the outset is defined as an opposition between man-woman, god-mortal, and rich-poor. Eros, romantic love, as a singular unified love is arguably a moral logos, whereas seductive love, again arguably, is an immoral love - a flight, even multiple flights - destined for abandonment. Historically, love has a *partage*, created in a mythos that has come to define meanings of love. Within this logos, in the example Rancière provides, is the creation of the meaning of woman as the symbolic space of woman-nature.

Michelet's account of history is where the historian lends his voice to those outside the written traditions of history - the voiceless, the people - but Rancière makes clear that history is never innocent, the historian himself carries meaning into the voice he lends; the *meaning of history is immanent to history*. In the love for the people, the land, Michelet's interval is embedded in a mythological discourse. Rancière identifies a case where Michelet defines love in terms of Greek mythology in his biography of man, *Origines du droit français*. Here the seductive love (sexual flight) of Zeus, results in an abandonment - Danaë and their child Perseus - who are cast into the world by Danaë's father as a flight of punishment, are ultimately welcomed and cared for by Nature. This tale forever casts the symbolic link of mother-nature as meaning: 'Nature speaks for the mute mother; nature's tears and emotions accompany the mother who accompanies her child. There is no abandoned child who is not received into nature's maternity'.¹³²

This interval of reconciling love that Michelet imparts to the people is founded on a maternal theory of meaning, mother-nature symbolism. The romantic love that Michelet, the revolutionary romantic, casts upon the people is a maternal-nature love, the French land, that gives shelter to the historically abandoned people. Michelet's romantic love is bound to a seductive love: Barbara [Marie] and Rustica [Victoire] are no longer individuals but cast, even abandoned, into the multitudes that are now held in an abstract collective - the historical subject - of unity. This love, a shifting line from seductive to romantic and then a return to an abandonment of seductive love, is now Michelet's ideal bond that fills the gap between the two worlds of rich and poor, the scholar and the people. Michelet's gesture-interval of romantic maternal love is held in the space of mythological symbolism; this too we should understand as a partition of the *partage*. Rancière tells us that Michelet's woman, as the power of nature that holds the primary significance of maternity, operates under the act of welcoming. Maternity, the welcoming love, resides in the sensible condition of place as home, the place of rest and the place of forgetting one's labour; a place of recovery and renewal. The *partage* of

¹³² Ibid., p. 75

the mythological symbolism of love is mother-nature-domesticity and a love of creation, repetition and forgetting.

The mythos of love external to maternal love - the seductive love - between Michelet and his servants, meets the same fate as Danaë, for they too are abandoned under the mantle of bourgeois propriety; the romantic love of his third marriage. Rustica and Barabara are cast out into the world - a century - as Michelet the moralist¹³³ defines it, where men abandon women in the egotism of the single male.¹³⁴ This 'bachelor century'¹³⁵ where the young men 'do not want to love'¹³⁶ is 'a new and fatal form of social life'.¹³⁷ Rancière shows us the paradox to be found in Michelet's reconciliatory love, his book, and the history of France: all founded on the nurturing-maternal source of women's love, the same womanly love that he, and this modern democratic century, abandons. This paradox makes clear that Michelet's interval of love is an ever-shifting line of the *partage* that works itself into the knots that define the aesthetic-politic of the modern era. As Rancière concludes, the historians' science - logos - is 'first of all, an art of love'¹³⁸ - pathos.

The Pleasure to do Nothing

We have now witnessed the interval in the circumstances of the bourgeois (Irene) and the pedagogue (Michelet), and both reveal a knot within their aesthetic experience of the gesture; their declarations of equality have an ancient *partage* of relations of hierarchy. In his recent essay, *Work, Identity, Subject*, Rancière discusses leisure, and associates it with an action, a willed action, of doing nothing. He then follows on to claim this space-time of a nothing as capable of being an emancipatory episode for the working-class. I take this nothing and claim it to be in the same place as a gesture, an interval. We see that this nothing is a positive for Rancière in that it breaks the *partage* as to who has the right to do nothing and, as I argue in the conclusion to this thesis, ultimately this nothing - this interval - provides a place for a something to come in terms of an egalitarian promise.

To explain the association of leisure with the space of a nothing, Rancière takes Aristotle's concept of leisure as a true action (one chooses the action for its own sake) and it is thus an end in itself. But as Rancière declares, this willed action is only within the realm of those who are free from the constraints of work. Historically, leisure has only been available to those who do not need to work. Rancière makes the connection between leisure to a nothing by way of Stendhal's nineteenth century novel *Scarlet and Black*. This is the story of the plebian,

¹³³ Ibid., p.80

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 83

¹³⁶ Michelet. *la femme*. Rancière. "The Petrified Flower". *Short Voyages*. p. 80

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 85

Julian Sorel, who attempts to climb the ladder of the French social order – a flight of material and social aspirations – only to end up incarcerated and under a death sentence after shooting his lover – the village mayor's wife. Stendhal tells us that while Sorel is in jail awaiting execution, he comes to the conclusion that this moment of time, of doing nothing and not wanting anything, is the 'true secret of happiness'.¹³⁹ This space-time between life and death is Sorel's interval.

This moment of a doing nothing as a space of emancipation for the worker begins to become clear. However, as Rancière claims, it is also an emancipation from the production of the dichotomies of the *partage* i.e., the perceptions and sensory experiences of structural oppositions,

form and matter, nature and culture, appearance and truth, activity and passivity, the vulgar and the refined, work and leisure, play and serious activity.¹⁴⁰

This interval has a profound effect as a place that reorganizes and recomposes structures of being.

Rancière believes that this episode is an aesthetic experience that functions as a strategic suspension that acts within as well as hiding the tension inherent in these oppositions, revealing a space of interpretive practices. We see this in Rancière's aesthetic-politic of Irene's peace within the confinement of the asylum and Michelet's account of love. This interval as the space of becoming, between logos and pathos, sense and nonsense, also has an ability to resist meaning and ordering. Rancière claims the nothing-interval has a practical counterpart as a form of emancipation through which workers declare themselves inhabitants of the same sensible world as the poets. He says, '[it] is not just valid for the individualistic artist; it is also true for the rise of the class of workers in the new society'.¹⁴¹ This is the class of workers of the new society of the aesthetic regime of culture, art, nonart, and pleasure. It is a continuation of Rancière's study of Gauny, where the interval between jobs for Gauny was a time of liberation, wandering the streets of Paris, thinking and creating. This interval, this pleasure to do nothing, is the 'the constitution of a specific 'aesthetic' sphere thus appears as an essential moment in the modern idea of equality'.¹⁴²

Rancière understands this interval, this space of separation between the structures of opposition, to be at the heart of the workers' emancipation. He suggests that this nothing can

¹³⁹ Rancière. "Work, Identity, Subject". *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene. The Philosophy of Radical Equality*. p. 216

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 215

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 216

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 214

be interpreted in the way of the Marxist thesis ‘the necessity to wait for the development of the productive forces, as a necessary preamble to any revolutionary action’.¹⁴³

Jean-Philippe Deranty in his review of *Aisthesis, Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, discusses Rancière’s paradoxical shift of emphasis from acts of dissensus and subjectivisation in his early political writings to his later writings on inaction, passivity and apathy, as the ‘ultimate gestures of resistance’.¹⁴⁴ As Deranty points out, it would be shortsighted to read this as ‘a late defeatism or pessimistic abdication by a once radical philosopher’.¹⁴⁵ There are two reasons why I agree with this. Firstly, to limit Rancière’s definitions of acts of resistance to a dichotomy of active or passive would be to fall into the old structural categories of the *partage* of oppositions. Secondly, it impoverishes the gesture-interval of the nothing. As we have seen, not only does the nothing tie and untie the central knot inherent in the modern aesthetic-politic, but also this interval of the nothing is precisely a hermeneutic, interpretive episode, a space of becoming. This space, in the shadow of the ontological world, as Deranty points out, is an episode - arguably in the life of the philosopher - and also in the lives of the people, in their actions of politics and art.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.216

¹⁴⁴ Jean Philippe Deranty. “The Symbolic and The Material: A Review of Jacques Rancière’s *Aisthesis: Scenes from The Aesthetic Regime of Art*”. *Parrhesia*. Number 18.2013.139-144.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR. The Surface of Conversion

Social art

Rancière states that the line that divides has been a constant object of his study,¹⁴⁶ tying all his research together. His most recent writings, *The Future of the Image*,¹⁴⁷ *Aesthetics and its Discontents*¹⁴⁸ and *Aisthesis*¹⁴⁹ this line of study turns toward the separations between the fine, applied and decorative arts. The partition of the applied and decorative arts, the focus of this chapter, has a clear relation to the line of the distribution of the sensible in that these arts configure the shared material world. As stated in chapter one, the distribution of the sensible is a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity, which is the primary action of these arts, hence they operate as a *dispositif* – ‘a way of occupying a place where relations between bodies, images, spaces and times are redistributed’.¹⁵⁰ The applied and decorative arts, architecture* and design, construct specific spaces that ‘frame time and people in space’;¹⁵¹ thus perceptual capabilities, by way of dividing and constructing the territory of the common, reconfiguring material and symbolic relations. Designed environments meander through all levels of the *partage* creating plural partitions, structuring bodies and actions, sensorium and identity. Rancière makes the interrelation between everyday design and aesthetic-politics and the distribution of the sensible explicit:

The shared material world – the practices of creators of commodities, of those who arrange them in shop windows or put their images in catalogues; the practices of the constructors of buildings or posters, who construct ‘street furniture’, but also of politicians who propose new forms of community around certain exemplar institutions, practices and facilities...by the drawing of lines, arranging words or distributing surfaces, one also designs divisions of communal space. It is the way in which, by assembling words or forms, people define not merely various forms of art, but certain configurations of what can be seen and what can be thought, certain forms of inhabiting the material world...these configurations which are at once material and symbolic.¹⁵²

Rancière’s analysis of this *partage* under the aesthetic regime extends his account of the distribution of the sensible. He believes it offers potentialities, new connections, articulations and a new aesthetic subjectivity - an aesthetic value - and this is a positive for him. Although

¹⁴⁶ “Jacques Rancière and the (Re) Distribution of the Sensible: Five Lessons” in Artistic Research.

¹⁴⁷ Jacques Rancière. *The Future of the Image*, London & New York. Verso, 2007

¹⁴⁸ Jacques Rancière. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. Trans, Steve Corcoran. UK & USA. Polity Press. 2009

¹⁴⁹ Jacques Rancière. *Aisthesis Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*. London & New York, Verso. 2013

¹⁵⁰ Rancière. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. p.22

* Architecture is used here in its modern profession, where it takes part in all forms of design: urban, interior, industrial, furniture and fashion design. This is different from the traditional architecture that operated solely for the purpose of the powerful, elite and religion.

¹⁵¹ Rancière. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. p. 23

¹⁵² Rancière. *The Future of the Image*. p. 91

this expanded *partage* contains a Rancierian paradox these moments of inclusivity, emancipation and transformative capacities are never far from the old *partage* of domination and hierarchy in their production and expression. I will discuss this in detail later.

Rancière comes to his analysis of the decorative arts from the standpoint of a Mallarmé quotation ‘celebrating the new splendour, the ordinary magnificence of the human artifice’,¹⁵³ and evaluates this ordinary magnificence from the aesthetic-politic of the aesthetic regime: the aestheticized life. Following on from Roger Marx’s description of these arts as social art,¹⁵⁴ Rancière relates this term to the intelligible, perceptual and habitual experiences of the everyday interwoven with his key concepts, again exposing the deep and complex network of relations to be found in his philosophy.

The social arts capture all the Rancièrian analyses discussed so far, and in this chapter I highlight how they are intimately linked to his concepts of the distribution of the sensible, equality, education, police, aesthetic-politics and the regimes of the arts and, importantly, how flights and intervals show up in its manifestation. Social art is a field that, by its practice and definition, constantly configures and reconfigures partitions of intelligibility and perceptions by the practice of dissensus – flight - from its own previous prescriptions of style. It is a common belief amongst the practitioners of social art that it has a transformative potential on an individual and collective basis: it too is a taking of the people on an aesthetic and practical flight.

So far we have seen individual examples of responses to *partage* configurations revealed in flights, such as Gauny’s emancipated flights away from his built surrounds and Emma Bovary’s life as a flight to the world of decorative arts. Also the spaces of configuration provided Irene’s gesture with a time and space of peace and freedom in a state of madness. As well, Michelet’s understanding of love, amongst other things, revolves around the space of maternal domesticity. Flights and intervals as spaces of interpretation that carry pathos, mythos and logos are stabilized into forms of space and objects – the spatial arts - revealing a mute speech (Rancière’s terminology) for the many possible meanings inscribed in objects, both material and symbolic. This stabilization Rancière calls ‘the surface of conversion’,¹⁵⁵ where ‘words, forms, things exchange roles’,¹⁵⁶ a form of communication embedded in the surface and operating as a symbol. The surface of conversion can speak in several ways - as a form of aesthetic democracy - to expand the properties of the distribution of the sensible, and also (attempt) to convert the experience of modern being.

Rancière’s discourse on aesthetic-politics appears as early as *The Nights of Labour*. The writings and actions of the proletariat show up the altered sphere of appearance and

¹⁵³ Rancière. *Aisthesis*. p. 133

¹⁵⁴ Roger Marx, *L’Art social* (Paris: E.Fasquelle, 1913), pp.112-13. *Aisthesis*. p.133

¹⁵⁵ Rancière. *The Future of the Image*. p. 106

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

experience. Here ‘man’ - the worker - consists of a being having access and the ability to express an aesthetic life: this, too, was not only a pleasure – a right – of the elite. ‘The workers had ‘adopted a generalized aesthetic outlook’.¹⁵⁷ Rancière claims this act of aesthetic subjectivization was a new, ‘constitution – a specific aesthetic sphere [that] appears as an essential moment in the modern era of equality’.¹⁵⁸ Gauny, the decisive figure in Rancière’s historical analysis, heralds much of what is the aesthetic revolution – the aesthetic regime – in action. His flights of aesthetic suspension, his space of intellectual enquiry is in the space and time of cultural transformation that not only altered the identity of art but also the identity of the subject. The aesthetic regime holds promise of a life reconfigured, transformed, both in its making and viewing. For Rancière this is political and holds political capabilities, not in the sense of an overturning of the state, ‘reducible to political upheaval [but] a deeper, more all-encompassing conception of revolution...to change the meaning of life’.¹⁵⁹ As Rancière argues in “Aesthetics as Politics”, part of this meaning of life is ‘a community of feeling, not agreement’.¹⁶⁰

This change in meaning demonstrates how the arts, in this case the social arts, are entangled with distribution of the sensible in the aesthetic regime. Rancière’s ethical and poetic regime proclaims an hierarchical order defining who can have what type of aesthetic experience and perception. In the aesthetic regime this changes via the reconfigured distribution of the sensible; here this experience is related to the decorated artifice being available to the people. The aesthetic revolution – aesthetic regime - has invoked an aesthetic attitude; an aestheticized life which Rancière believes has not yet fully lived out its potential. For him the aesthetic regime reveals a humanity to come through its creation of a space where the arts are part of everyday life, a life that is lived under the influence of aesthetic values. This regime has erased distinctions between the different arts, in turn opening up new perceptions and interpretations. Decorative art now interlocks with industrial design and the spatial arts of interior design and architecture, opening up a specific space within the *patarge* by changing the aesthetic-politic of the everyday experience.

Pebbles

In “Decorative Art as Social Arts: Temple, House, Factory”,¹⁶¹ Rancière provides an example of piece of Renè Lalique jewellery*, as a sign of equality. For Rancière this object manifests a political action: the designer incorporates an aesthetic democratic language of pebbles into a showy item of value. In considering today the aesthetic style of Art Nouveau and contemplating why Rancière might be intellectually attracted to it, I recall what the Art

¹⁵⁷ Tanke. *Jacques Rancière, Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p. 25

¹⁵⁸ Rancière. “Work, Identity, Subject”. *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene. The Philosophy of Radical Equality*. p. 214

¹⁵⁹ Tanke. *Jacques Rancière, Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p. 83

¹⁶⁰ Rancière. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. p. 36

¹⁶¹ Rancière. “Decorative Art as Social Art: Temple, House, Factory (Paris-London-Berlin). *Aisthesis*.

* The late nineteenth century Art Nouveau French designer-craftsperson.

Nouveau artist, Walter Crane said - it is a style in which 'lines seem not to conform...lines which begin parallel but then converge and eventually contradict each other'.¹⁶² This design style of free lines not only portrays pictorial compositions and forms of landscape and insects, the everyday experience of nature as pre-individual and impersonal life, but also the use of material montage as a 'small poem'¹⁶³ expressing a democratic aesthetic - creating unity out of difference. Lalique's piece of jewellery, composed of materials of unequal value in a single entity, disturbs the myths of what jewellery means. Rancière describes this equality in the everyday, as:

What glimmers on the bust of the high-society lady is thus this impersonal, egalitarian life, and not the mark of her class...the value of her jewellery is no longer given by the size or quality of the stone, but by the singular manifestation of great anonymous life composed by the artisan's thoughts and hands.¹⁶⁴

The 'poor pebbles picked from the gravel in Lalique's garden'¹⁶⁵ and placed into the object is an artistic gesture that operates outside of the normative artistic practice of the day. Did these pebbles find their way into a piece of jewellery from a wandering, a moment of disinterested contemplation or via an interval of the inactive artist resting in the pleasure of a nothing? This gesture of the pebble reinterprets the mythos of jewellery as a form of valuable gems adorning the elite by reincarnating the ancient stone and all its associated myths into a modern medium. This jewellery, as Rancière explains, is a social art of the aesthetic regime, and as it accompanies the rich bourgeois woman to events this artifice is now 'incorporated into their life',¹⁶⁶ - the everyday aesthetic-politic. The contradiction of the appearance of equality with the reality of those who can afford such items is not lost on Rancière. He explains the contradiction in terms of the pictorial impersonal life of the object incorporated into the life of the owner. It enters the community, a sharing of the sensible, as she wears it. It becomes a subtle language of equality by means of a fashionable style, that of the changing of the old guard, the old aesthetic *partage*, having both evolutionary and revolutionary effect. For Rancière this is also an acceptance of a unique artistic expression over mimetic configurations.

Lalique's necklace is historically bracketed between two major social art movements, one was the Aesthetic Movement of the nineteenth century, and the other was twentieth century Modernism. Both movements tell the story collective flights, and how the democratization of beauty became commodity logic, hence the new distribution of the sensible. Here I give a genealogical account, (similar to Rancière), that shows the clear and direct line of flight to surface of conversion, demonstrating his conceptual analysis of the distribution of the sensible and the knots that emerge from this aesthetic-politic. Firstly, with the seminal

¹⁶² Geoffrey Warren. *All Colours Book of Art Nouveau*. London. Cathay Books. 1974. p. 4

¹⁶³ Rancière, *Aisthesis*. p.143

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 136

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p.135

Aesthetic Movement and, secondly, I follow on from Rancière's discussion of Modernist designer Peter Behrens, revealing the ambiguities attached to social art when aesthetic democratization has universal appeal.

The Aesthetic Movement, also known as the Cult of Beauty and 'Art for Art's sake' - '*L'art pour l'art*', inspired by Theophile Gautier's radical writings, reflects how this movement was implicit in the aesthetic revolution - the aesthetic regime. This four-decade movement was a philosophical, artistic and cultural flight. This was Rancière's indisciplinaryity; a 'heterogeneous cast of characters'¹⁶⁷ - artists, poets, writers, thinkers, architects, designers and decorators. Their aim was a quiet revolution: to change the cultural landscape of Victorian Britain by bringing affordable beauty into the lives of everyday people. As one of their famous associates, William Morris, announced: 'What is beauty, after all, unless everyone can share it?'¹⁶⁸ This is reminiscent of Rancière's sharing of the sensible one hundred and fifty years later. The revolution was to be built on beauty, hence we see Rancière's aesthetic value: the changing of the meaning of life as a democratic aesthetic and a sharing of the sensible. The Movement was united in a flight away from the precepts of the old establishment and the 'confining Victorian rules of proprietary and bourgeois morality';¹⁶⁹ this included the art establishment and consumer preference for historical works that demonstrated social hierarchies. The Movement aligns neatly with Rancière's aesthetic revolution, the break from the old *partage* of the poetic regime. Art for the aesthetes was not about preaching (ethical regime), or telling stories (poetic regime),¹⁷⁰ it was to have no subject, just mood, colour, harmony, beauty and form. The group believed art should correlate with life: not art as an autonomous sphere but instead to be everywhere - in the home, public buildings, clothing and furnishings. This fits well with Rancière's aesthetic regime - where art is everywhere and in all manner of form: 'Art is art insofar as it is also nonart, or is something other than art'.¹⁷¹ The Aesthetic Movement advocated a life of practical nonart sensations - the aestheticized life. Rancière points out the importance of the decorative art - the social art:

Decorative art is not a utilitarian art whose external finality could be opposed to the autonomous work of art. Nor is it an art meant for consumption by the leisure class. It is an art that obeys its concept, by responding to a vital double function: habitation and expression.¹⁷²

The aestheticized life allowed for a personal emancipation of a certain kind, the Rancièrian flight of individual re-identification. Lynn Federle Orr,¹⁷³ tells us the idea of individual celebrity became a way of being for the petit-bourgeoisie. New identities emerged where, 'your

¹⁶⁷ Stephen Calloway. "The Search for a New Beauty". *The Cult of Beauty The Aesthetic Movement 1860-1900*. Stephen Calloway and Lynn Federle Orr (Eds). London. V & A publishing. 2011. p.11

¹⁶⁸ Fiona MacCarthy. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/mar/26/aestheticism-exhibition-victoria-albert-museum>

¹⁶⁹ Calloway. *The Cult of Beauty*. p. 11

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Rancière. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. p. 36

¹⁷² Rancière. *Aisthesis*. p.142

¹⁷³ Federle Orr. *The Cult of Beauty*. p. 24

choice of paintings, objects and interior decoration told people who you were and indeed who you were not'.¹⁷⁴ The idea that the authentic individual is primarily an aesthetic being takes hold, develops and then presents itself as modern being. This re-identification is a dissensus: Tanke says this 're shaping of the self...[is a] contest[ing of] the spacio-temporal allocations of the dominant order'.¹⁷⁵ The house beautiful became an aspiration, and the detail of how one chooses to live one's life¹⁷⁶ became an important social face for the new elite and middle-class. 'The modern concept of middle-class lifestyle',¹⁷⁷ emerges; Flaubert's *Emma Bovary* of a decade earlier now materialized, and the aestheticised, cultured individual life becomes a partition in the new *partage*.

This new aesthetic style of unique anachronistic combinations expressed and encouraged flights of sensuous imaginings; it was 'elaborate, allusive, extravagantly literary and exotic',¹⁷⁸ one of excess, enchantment and eccentricity, with its alter ego of 'simplistic geometric, reticence and purity'.¹⁷⁹ These sensuous imaginings resonate with Rancière's argument that art experienced in the aestheticized life as a nonart – social art – carries a political promise of emancipatory effect. These spaces of a dreamy languor enticed a dissensus-flight from production – strict Victorian morality toward a space of perpetual aesthetic suspension.

What becomes interesting with the Aesthetic Movement is the emergence of the designer having an individual political voice and inserting it into the language of social art; this is Rancière's account of what creates the aesthetic regime and aesthetic-politics. If we recall Rancière's account of the first line scribed into the *partage* in Plato's *Republic*, the artisan had no political voice, no entitlement to speech – but what we see here with the aesthetes is that the designer agentially intervenes and inscribes a mute speech of equality and a shared sensible into the artifact. The social artist can dissent, inverting Plato's *Republic* into configurations of the sensible, spaces and objects. As Rancière says of speech,

in the act of speaking, man doesn't transmit his knowledge, he makes poetry; he translates and invites others to do the same. He communicates as an artisan: as a person who handles words like tools.¹⁸⁰

Paradoxically, the social artist in the twentieth century reverts back to the Platonic ethical outlook insisting on a truth in the material, symbolic and functional aspect of the object with

¹⁷⁴ <http://www.guardian.com/artanddesign/2011/mar/26/aestheticism-exhibition.victoria-albert-museum>

¹⁷⁵ Tanke. *Jacques Rancière, Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p. 27

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/mar/26/aestheticism-exhibition-victoria-albert-museum>

¹⁷⁷ Ferdele Orr. *The Cult of Beauty*. p. 24

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/mar/26/aestheticism-exhibition-victoria-albert-museum>

¹⁷⁹ Calloway. *The Cult of Beauty*. p. 11

¹⁸⁰ Tanke. *Jacques Rancière, Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p. 39

its practical end within the community. This will be elucidated later on in Rancière's discussion on Behrens.

This Movement, I argue, was the model for our aestheticized life: the contemporary aesthetic commodity logic we have today. This was primarily due to two socio-political events that occurred in nineteenth century Britain (home of the aesthetes). Rancière's political 'promise' of the aesthetic regime, and the relations between aesthetics and politics becomes absolutely manifest in the socio-political context of this Movement. The aesthetes desired cultural change which came into effect once the government - Rancière's police - intervened to institutionalize their flight, thus stabilising it into a new *partage* of the social field.

First, moderate reforms passed by the British parliament - the police - was a response aimed at suppressing social anxieties, both of the workers and the new elite, in order to prevent a destabilization of the old hierarchical establishment. The introduction of laws allowing for Liberal ideals about individual commercial interests were, in Rancièrian terms, the *police* shifting the line of the *partage* as a means of maintaining the *oligarchy*.* The new entrepreneurial class that had arisen out of these commercial laws of re-distribution redirected the middle-class's Victorian moral mediocrity into a flight of consumerism - the new attitude. This new consumer optimism created a semblance of social stability.

The second event shows us how the avant-garde aesthetes who were part of, and also marginalised in, this new social milieu were able to benefit artistically and commercially from this reformed society - *partage*. This brings us to the Great Exhibition of 1851 as having direct impact on how the decorative arts, in particular the Aesthetic Movement had on the new economic *partage*. As the showcase of British superiority in industrialization and manufacturing the exhibition fell well short of expectations. British products were seen as inferior to those of France and Germany. Manufacturing techniques and an aesthetic style reflecting conventional themes and motifs was considered quaint. The aesthetic-politics of national identity now favoured the aesthetes, as their style of social art offered a competitive aesthetic newness of sensible excitement. As well, their belief in a universal shared beauty opened up a greater social field to manufacturing and commerce. This new egalitarian beauty merged into the new cultural identity, benefitting the new entrepreneurial class, the police and the oligarchs. Design and design education came under police reform, establishing an amalgamation between design, industry and mass production. Designer and industry now went about educating the tastes of the middle class. Social arts worked in conjunction with education, production and the new media. The marginalized avant-garde aesthete now moved into the *partage*, reframing and re-aestheticizing the look of the new English economy. This is precisely Rancière's ever-shifting line of the *partage*. This aesthetic education in taste at the

* Rancière uses the term oligarch as the rulers of those who rule. Oligarchs are above government - police - who maintain the oligarch rule through strategies of distributions.

behest of the police sits uncomfortably with Rancière and Jacotot's account of the artistic lesson,

artists more readily discover the language of equality than university professors. They renounce the tyranny of the fixed message, creating spaces for play, reciprocal engagement, and negotiated meaning.¹⁸¹

This arrangement of the designer as educator was an aesthetic of equality institutionalized but in terms of commodification. The surface of conversion, even though one of play and mixed message extends the *partage* to an aesthetic field and with this reveals the contradictions and ambiguities in the aesthetic regime - Rancière's structural knot.

By the turn of the century the British model of the aestheticised *partage*, the beautified economics of a stabilized social, had migrated to the continent in the form of Art Nouveau as encapsulated in Lalique's necklace. Rancière claims 'the serpentine line...becomes the expression of this unanimous life that must found a new education of the mind and the senses'.¹⁸² This new *partage*, as a type of democracy, he states,

reconcile[d] art and industry...[natural forms] integrate furniture and the bibelots of rich art lovers with the global vision of an educated republic...finds a place in industry...[the]regenerated aesthetic affirms itself as the formative potential for a new society.¹⁸³

Urban researcher Håkan Forsell agrees, describing this aesthetic-politic period as one of,

aesthetic individualism...[married] to a middle class vision of economic liberalism...[as a form of] harmonious competition...a classless society without class struggle.¹⁸⁴

The Aesthetic Movement is one of the first explicit examples of what Adorno and Horkheimer class as *The Culture Industry*,¹⁸⁵ although for Rancière the aestheticized *partage* has positive possibilities: it has aesthetic values. Although the old *partage* returned to establish its dominance again, the Movement became the object of satire in the media, which labelled it Catholic, sexually transgressive, immoral and indecent. Now that the commercialization of nonart - social art - had been embedded in the logos of the new *partage* and the idea that aesthetics can be a medium to placate the people, the Aesthetic Movement's language of pathos as dissent could now be demolished. Rancière takes on this idea of an aesthetic placation, and as shown in the conclusion of this thesis, turns it into emancipatory possibilities.

¹⁸¹ Tanke. *Jacques Rancière, Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p. 39

¹⁸² Rancière. *Aisthesis*. p.144

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp.144-145

¹⁸⁴ Håkan Forsell. *Harmonious Competition & Aesthetic Individualism. Jugendstil and Urban Life*. ca. 1900. <http://www.hakanforsell.se/architecture1900.htm>

¹⁸⁵ http://english.as.uky.edu/sites/default/files/Horkheimer%20and%20Adorno_Culture%20Industry.

The purified line of the partage

The social art of Modernism stands on the other side of Lalique's necklace. Rancière focuses on how architect and designer, Peter Behrens, had a great effect and affect on the formation of a new subjectivity and socio-cultural expressions ie., the next new aesthetic-politic *partage*. This leads Rancière to confront the problem of what happens to individual will when the space-time of a social art is expressed in a totality, especially a style that espouses one of egalitarian equality. The Modernists believed their social art duty was to remove the crises of the nineteenth century modernity with a new aesthetic language that would ultimately transform society.

Behrens - at first a member of the Jugendstil (German brand of Art Nouveau) - took flight from the world of the 'serpentine line of a unanimous life', to join the new 'the cult of the line',¹⁸⁶ as Rancière calls it. Modernism was the emerging style, and the line of 'art for art's sake' was reconfigured into theoretical, moral and spiritual mantras of: 'Form follows function...[f]orm and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union',¹⁸⁷ and 'Ornament and Crime',¹⁸⁸ which fostered ideals of Platonic ethics. These were the ruptures that drove an aesthetic, intellectual, ethical, spiritual and altogether 'tasteful' flight, not only for Behrens but also in the social arts.

The flight toward universal principles opposed the space and time of the specific and local of the Aesthetic and Nouveau movements; a dissensus, a flight from the exotic and colourful curvaceous lines of nature that had previously occurred. Rancière states of Modernist social art:

According to this principle...the design of objects to approximate as closely as possible to their function, and the design of the icons that represent them to approximate as closely as possible to the information they are supposed to provide about those objects.¹⁸⁹

Things are what they are, no dressing, no veneer, no illusionary effects but a naked truth of materials and function. Behrens's purpose was to *improve the overall taste in Germany by improving the design of everyday objects and products*,* with a reinstallation of the ethical function of art, along with the pedagogical and intellectual theories of the traditional hierarchical arrangements; he who knows and he who does not, thus cancelling out the subject of its own speech – taste.

¹⁸⁶ Rancière. *The Future of the Image*. p.93

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/education/school-educator-programs/teacher-resources/arts>

¹⁸⁸ Adolf Loos. 1908 Essay.

¹⁸⁹ Rancière. *The Future of the Image*. p. 93

* This was the aim of the German Werkbund, which Behrens was a member. This is a well-known statement but without any formal reference.

As a truthful, abstracted and authoritative line of geometry where the 'pure' line equalled 'pure' function, Modernism was a codification of the non-mimetic, non-hierarchical (qua non-social hierarchy) of object, space, and a new community. This is the new distribution line of the sensible, with an aesthetic-politic that sat in the aesthetic regime but its principle foundation was in the ethical regime. The Modernist did not recognize the equality of the senses until the sensible was abstracted. The sensible world returned to a hierarchy of the eye and mind. The 'spiritual union' - form and function - of secular Modernism, Rancière argues, was to be a 'substitute [for] the sacraments of religion'.¹⁹⁰ The clear unified lines of parallel equality were materially profitable; a product line aligned to the assembly line¹⁹¹ of mass production economics and the graph line of corporate rationalism. This line of aesthetic equality undoubtedly configures the line of divided labour and alienation.

Rancière classifies these objects that correlate to space and vice versa, as 'types'.¹⁹² In the chapter "The Surface of Design"¹⁹³ he makes one of his signature oblique connections, which is amusingly consonant with his own style of literarity - between Behrens and Mallarmé. The philosopher of radical equality finds sameness in the difference between the abstract modernist and the symbolist poet. Briefly, the argument is one of language, where Rancière aligns poetry, letters and type to inaugurate a discussion on style, which amounts to a discussion on equality and individual will.

Firstly, style in terms of social art: we see Rancière's concept of the surface of conversion. This surface's aesthetic equality has a double-fold: literarity and educative, with a potential power to infuse transformative effect installing its double effect - a surface of communication - a communication found on the streets and in everyday objects: 'Where any piece of furniture and salon ornament thus becomes a poem, and the equality of all the arts risks becoming translated into the overwrought quality of every useful object',¹⁹⁴ i.e., mute speech. According to Rancière, Modernism as the 'standardized cult of line',¹⁹⁵ is where the line equates to the flat surface, and speaks of a new shared place, a new ideal - material and symbolic - and so a new logos. However these clear stylized lines formulate a knot that is inherent in the aesthetic regime. Conversion is not only the surface where things exchange roles, but also a means of communication: the desired conversion to a new society declaring a new social logic. The style of the flat line surface gave 'the community its seal...define[d] a new texture of communal existence'.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ Rancière. *The Future of the Image*. p. 97

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 93

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 95

¹⁹³ Rancière. *The Future of the Image*.

¹⁹⁴ Rancière. *Aisthesis*. p. 146

¹⁹⁵ Rancière. *The Future of the Image*. p. 96

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 96-97

Rancière says of style 'it adapts to life...and expresses the life of the people in a time',¹⁹⁷ although he follows this statement with the question - which style? - as style is always dependent on the double relation of articulation and interpretation. In other words, the leading style, the one singled out by the *partage*, is there precisely because of its specific articulated properties. Common culture has a style, a shared common experience, a collective aesthetic attitude and thus an aesthetic democratic, and Rancière argues this is an inclusive equality of the senses. Here style has a positive effect for Rancière, although I would argue that we should return to his question - what style? The style of Modernism in the highest sense of the canon was a style that dismissed – rejected – many sensible attributes. This coming together of an aesthetic community was in the main a singular aesthetic; this was speech without the noise. Rancière is well aware of the differences in the sameness of style - quality/inequality - as where detail equates to hierarchies of social order, for example leather versus vinyl. His argument here lies in that it is the aesthetic style that reigns supreme as sign and symbol. Again, I would argue the point on sign and symbol - that it operates primarily on the mind and eye and does not serve the full complement of the sensible. Style, for Rancière, symbolises a collective life, idea, object, form and habit, a 'symbol of a feeling in common'¹⁹⁸ - a *dispositif* of a totality – 'a firm identity'.¹⁹⁹ In this *partage* of the aesthetic regime, this common form of Modernist abstracted life presented a complete, rationalized, framed space with the people within it, reminiscent of Rosellini's neorealist framing of the people, a 'common culture has a style.'

Rancière, as we know, presents the double fold - the contradiction - and here it is the knot of style. This spiritualised union of Behrens's line with its form as function singularity, presented itself as the new purity of the *partage*, thus giving an appearance of a shared sensible of individual and collective emancipation. It is also the space-time of rationalized, ordered structures of the police and economics. This was the social revolution: the great totalitarian project of the commercial aestheticisation of life, and the institutionalization of the consumer, bound to the style of the new and the novel.

Behrens, for Rancière, symbolizes all of this in terms of his work for the German electrical company AEG: a spiritual unity made concrete in style, mass production and labour. The streamlined objects and Modernist line of Behrens's factory design which was full of light and space, Rancière argues, inhabits life; the culture of work, a spiritualizing of industrial work as common life. Behrens's factory life-style is a far cry from Gauny's place of work.

This singular style is problematic; Rancière cites sociologist Georg Simmel,

¹⁹⁷ Rancière. *Aisthesis*. p. 143

¹⁹⁸ Peter Behrens from Rancière. *Aisthesis*. p. 149

¹⁹⁹ Tanke. *Jacques Rancière, Philosophy, Politics, Aesthetics*. p. 87

style is the aesthetic attempt to solve the great problem of life: how an individual work or behaviour, which is closed, a whole, can simultaneously belong to something higher, a unifying encompassing context...The fact that style also appears to the spectator at levels beyond the purely individual, to the broad emotional categories subject to the general rules of life, is the source of a calming effect, the feeling of security and serenity with which the strictly stylised object provides us. From the stimulation points of individuality to which the work of art so often appeals, life rises without respect to the stylized object into more pacified levels, where one no longer feels alone. There – or so at least these unconscious events can be interpreted – the supra-individual law of the objective structure before us finds its counterpart in the feeling that we too are reacting with the supra individual part of ourselves, which is subject to unified laws. Thus we are saved from absolute responsibility towards ourselves, from balancing on the narrowness of mere individuality.²⁰⁰

Rancière notes that style as a condition of expressing collective utopian unity implies the renunciation of the individual will, ‘the design of stylized objects must make this dis-individualization enter everyone’s consciousness through the habits of everyday life’.²⁰¹

Rancière considers the totality of Modernism as a symbolic episode of the metapolitics – the knot - of the aesthetic regime: ‘It is nevertheless too simple to reduce this figure of the aesthetic revolution to ‘utopian’ and totalitarian catastrophe’.²⁰² Rancière considers this more about a project of a life to come.

Tanke argues that, for Rancière, there is no pure art and no pure aesthetic; ‘forms of domination and equality operate within the very tissue of ordinary sense experience’.²⁰³ As the contradictions show, stylized ‘emancipation’ has the potential, even desire, to squash individual will. We must remember the lesson from Rancière: the equality of the intelligences - senses. Individuals *can* read the signs and symbols of the *partage* and, as the examples show, any environment can be broken with an existential, political and/or aesthetic dissent – flight - or a gesture: Irene found freedom looking through a barred window. The aesthetic regime tells us that each aesthetic episode, each interpretive moment of the nonart, social art, is a flight-dissent from its precursor. Social art, like fine arts, while bearing witness to life and events also instigates these episodes into the *partage*.

²⁰⁰ Rancière. *Aisthesis*, pp. 149-150. Georg Simmel, ‘Das Problem des Stiles’, in *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen, 1901-1908*, vol.11(Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp.383-4; ‘The problem of Style’, transl. Mark Ritter, in *Theory, Culture & Society* 8:3 (August 1991), pp.63-71.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 150

²⁰² Rancière. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, p. 38

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 31

A place without surface

As demonstrated, Rancière's distribution of the sensible (the social logic of domination and hierarchy) makes flight possible as the means of escaping the positions and identities imposed by this distribution. What this thesis has attempted to show is the spatio-temporal terms of the aesthetic suspension of flight and the following space-time configuration of the interval, which I have defined as an episode affected by the altered perceptions of flight. The interval as I have shown, is the space in-between logos and pathos, and in the context of social arts, we see the flight and interval manifest into a surface of conversion which finds its way back into the, albeit new, *partage*. For Rancière the interval is thus a necessary episode – a becoming – and hence one that proposes a political promise.

The interval as a space of individual and collective autonomous will is an aesthetic experience of connections, idle reflections and interpretive practice. This became evident in Irene and Michelet's interpretive gestures, as well as in the space of creative determinations between a flight of imagination and the surface of conversion in social art. In each case, a tension was revealed and the knot made visible and this, for Rancière, is a 'good'. It is an interpretive space where the knot can be teased into new reconfigurations offering potential possibilities. Rancière's interval, as the space of the artist and emancipated worker, is a strategic suspension of aesthetic value, providing an *aesthetic education* (a compensation for political revolution)²⁰⁴ – as task and lesson – where we can question the relations between objects and our estimations of subjects and their placed identities. Here we can cancel the logic that binds us to feelings and actions presented under the logos of history, mythos and theories. Rancière's aesthetic value incorporates Schiller's account that the aesthetic field offers an education that frees the individual, the world, from 'intellectual dependency'.²⁰⁵

The interval is a site that resists order and meaning, where we can, 'render ideas sensible, to turn them into a replacement for ancient mythologies'.²⁰⁶ In Rancièrian terms, Lalique's gesture of pebbles for the bourgeois is more effective than Michelet's gesture of love for the peasant.

Rancière discusses this of rendering ideas as sensible as having an aesthetic-politic outcome:

Aesthetic separation is therefore the process that transforms the solitude of free appearance into the lived reality and changes aesthetic idleness into the actions of a living community²⁰⁷ and in the case of the social arts the...Liberation of the individual will leaves its mark on

²⁰⁴ Rancière's *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, p. 35

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Rancière. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, p. 37

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 35-36

works and objects produced by the decorative arts, and they transmit it to spectators or consumers.²⁰⁸

Here lies the power of the interval as it relates to the material and symbolic logos of the surface of conversion. The interval, the place of reflection and intention, and a something to come, hosts a will of distributive egalitarian promise. An egalitarian promise where form, the representation of intelligence, does not override matter, sensation, because to divide the two is to create ‘two different humanities’.²⁰⁹ It is at this point Rancière answers his own question ‘what style?’ Not the style of sign and symbol but, as he suggests, the surface of conversion is a nonart of ‘Modest Art’.²¹⁰ Modest art, according to him, rearranges the sights and sounds of the common world just enough to alter and modify our gaze and attitude.

Rancière’s modest art ‘should aim to create and recreate the bonds between individuals, to give rise to new modes of confrontation and participation’.²¹¹ This nonart contains a subtle irony and quiet play rather than a loud critical denouncing. The reason for this is, ‘to undo the alliance between artistic radicality and political radicality’.²¹² Modest art, as a surface of conversion, resides in the interval and contains the experience of an aesthetic education, a not promising to support ‘the cause of political emancipation with forms of art’.²¹³

Rancière, in terms of modest art, again follows on from Schiller’s account of *free play*, (as an authentic interval): ‘Man is only fully a human being when he plays’.²¹⁴ Play-interval is a place that has no end, no determination; this in itself challenges the distribution of the sensible. This sweet pleasure of play, is a dissensus with no determination, an interval that is not so much apathy but a refusal, and in the sense of nonart as modest art, a disruption of the relation between the utopian visions of art and politics and, instead, reconfigure the aesthetic-politics of the common world with an aesthetic value.

²⁰⁸ Rancière. *Aisthesis*. p. 149

²⁰⁹ Rancière. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. p. 31

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 21

²¹¹ Ibid.

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²¹³ Ibid., p. 33

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