

***“Me Too, I’m an Artist”:***  
**Refiguring Aesthetic Education**

by

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## Abstract

Who gets to play? This dissertation addresses the question by examining common forms of aesthetic experience enacted in everyday forms of classroom experience, as viewed through Jacques Rancière's notion of 'the politics of the aesthetic'. The purpose of this dissertation is to build on a view of emancipated learning by linking Rancière's notion of intellectual emancipation to *equally* resonant arguments in the works of Ellsworth, Lather, and Bakhtin.

Using movie, cartoon, and theatrical idioms, as well as my own personal misadventures, my story pivots not only on Rancière's pre-supposition of the 'intellectual equality of anyone', but also upon the view that 'knowing is nothing - doing is everything'. These two points, brought together, suggest a performative theater that departs not only from traditional/progressive forms of pedagogy, but also from forms of critical pedagogy that would see themselves as the emancipatory solution to the former.

Taking Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* - literally-, I highlight a notion of 'affordances of equality' that updates Jacotot's practice of experimenting in 'the gap between accreditation and act'. This way of doing challenges the opposition - or rather plays in the gap - between theater and world, imitation and reality, an expert role and a talent imitable by anyone at all.

**Keywords:** emancipation; aesthetic education; Ellsworth; Rancière; critical pedagogy; art education;

# **Dedication**

For Etienne & Colleen

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It has occurred to me, now and then, that the writing of a dissertation almost requires yet another dissertation to explore the very process of writing a dissertation! Short of that quixotic project, please let me at least acknowledge the many friends, teachers, colleagues, and family members whose encouragement, friendship, and intellectual nurturance made this doctoral manuscript a reality.

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Bryson not only for asking me, *Why does it matter?*, but for also providing me with the rare opportunity to meet Jacques Rancière.

Let me also express special thanks to a good friend, James Ciatko, not only for granting me access to ‘the garret’ - his remarkable oeuvre of drawings and paintings - but also for the artworks/cartoons that Mr. Ciatko authored specifically for use in this thesis project. These images provide their own mode of counterpoint - their own form of visual dialogue - running at once with and against the grain of the text.

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## Abbreviations (Texts of Jacques Rancière)

- NL** *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France* (1989)  
**IS** *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (1991)  
**NH** *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge* (1994)  
**SP** *On the Shores of Politics* (1995)  
**D** *Dis-agreement: Politics & Philosophy* (1998)  
**PP** *The Philosopher & His Poor* (2003)  
**PA** *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (2004)  
**FW** *The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing* (2004)  
**FF** *Film Fables* (2006)  
**ES** *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009)  
**AS** *Aesthetics & Its Discontents* (2009)
- DW** 'Discovering New Worlds' in *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home & Displacement* (1994)  
**PSI** 'Politics, Identification, & Subjectivization' in *The Identity in Question* (1995)  
**PL** 'The Politics of Literature' in *SubStance* (2004)  
**AK** 'Thinking between Disciplines: An Aesthetics of Knowledge' in *Parrhesia* (2006)  
**PTA** 'Problems & Transformations in Critical Art' in *Participation* (2006)  
**AFI** 'Regime Change' (Interview with J. Rancière) in *Artforum* (2007)  
**HPA** 'The Method of Equality' in *Jacques Rancière: History Politics Aesthetics* (2009)  
**JR** 'A Few Remarks on the Method of Jacques Rancière' in *Parallax* (2009)

It was only toward the middle of the twentieth century that the inhabitants of many European countries came, in general unpleasantly, to the realization that their fate could be influenced directly by intricate and abstruse works of philosophy - *Czesław Miłosz*

The pressure of the state machine is nothing compared with the pressure of a convincing argument...The inequality between the weapons of the dialectician and those of his adversary...is like a duel between a foot soldier and a tank. Not that every dialectician is so very intelligent or so very well educated, but all his statements are enriched by the cumulative thoughts of the masters...His listeners are defenceless. They could, it is true, resort to arguments derived from their observations of life, but such arguments are just as badly countenanced as any questioning of fundamental methodology - *Czesław Miłosz*

How can one avoid sinking into the mire of common sense, if not by becoming a stranger to one's own country, language, sex, and identity? Exile is already a form of dissidence, since it involves uprooting oneself from a family, a country, or a language - *Julia Kristeva*

## **(1) Bezdomny: Teaching from a Place of Homelessness**

### **In the Home of the Other: Political Imaginaries & Emancipatory Filmstrips**

In 1998, I had the opportunity to work abroad as a kind of ‘border intellectual’ in a Teacher Training College (NKJO) in Radom, Poland<sup>1</sup>. This experience, as it turned out, set into play not only a unique opportunity for a remarkable personal adventure, but also provided the occasion for a dissociating professional misadventure: having to teach from a uniquely disorienting position - a position of sudden, pedagogical homelessness.

Against the backdrop of this singular misadventure, I would like to advance a more general question: What might it mean to teach - or to learn - from a place of homelessness? What might it mean, then, to be effectively untethered from familiar ‘domestic’ (*domowy*) coordinates, from recognizable educational scenes and familiar methodological sequences, from accepted routines and hearable discourses? And what might come about when instructors and learners are separated from the reassuring patterns of knowing, doing or speaking - that is, stripped of known objects, knowable pedagogical landmarks, and mappable educational trajectories?

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<sup>1</sup> Radom is a medium-sized industrial city just south of Warsaw. Renowned for its resistant ‘hooliganism’ during communist-era martial law in the 1980’s, Radom was described by a Western news periodical as one of the most ‘dangerous’ towns in Europe, partly due to regional economic crises and capital disinvestment following the break-up of the Soviet Union. While Warsaw epitomized/enacted the new Western logic of ‘fast capital’, Radom was, so it seemed to me, Warsaw’s reverse-image: the city that capitalism forgot (for better or for worse).

To be homeless, in the way I am defining this term, is not, then, to be a ‘border intellectual’ confronting the ‘third spaces’ of cultural difference or critical resistance. On the contrary, it implied, for me, confronting the very limits of my own supposed intellectual and professional mastery (as well as whatever status my so-called Masters degree conferred to me). Homelessness also implied, then, the abrupt dispossession of those commonplace educational forms and role-relations through which that very sense of pedagogical mastery reassures itself, maintains its position/authority, or silently exalts its sense of privilege.

A bit like another professor-in-exile, Joseph Jacotot (the subject of Jacques Rancière’s *The Ignorant Master*), I found myself in a foreign country/culture, immersed in an unfamiliar and nearly unpronounceable foreign language. More vertiginously, I also discovered that I had landed in a radically different institutional-educational setting, one informed, in large part, by what might be called ‘socialist’, or ‘social-realist’, pedagogical methodologies.<sup>2</sup> While it actually may have been one of the reasons I was employed by the college, it was not my ‘mission’ to deliver future teachers from the institutionally-ingrained didacticism of State schooling, nor to liberate students from the so-called ‘banking education’ of some ‘fact-based’ social-realist regime. While no purpose was assigned to me, I think it was simply assumed that one of my functions in the college, as an American in the post-perestroika East, was to simply enact or transmit by osmosis, *fait accompli*, the progressive and participatory practices of student-centered-*slash-*

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<sup>2</sup> By ‘socialist’, I would be referring to the methods and curricula of State education in Poland as a Soviet ‘satellite’ nation. While monolithic, totalizing, and ideologically ‘affirmative’ in theory, this ideological system - what might be called social-realist ‘banking’ education - was, as I came to directly observe, solidly fraught with practical gaps, playful contradictions, sly winks, and subtle forms of resistance (played out by both teachers & students alike), in turn making this ‘mind-meld’ system far less ideologically-seamless or politically ‘successful’ than most critical Western educators might suspect.

democratic learning: educational methods appropriate to a new, post-Soviet ‘political reality’.

If this was an unspoken appointment, I was actually more interested, like Joseph Jacotot, in the question of ‘freedom’, in the possibilities of emancipation and critical forms of education. I was, in my own way, committed to various discourses of critique (i.e., critical pedagogy) which both problematized the possibilities of freedom and autonomy, while advancing various critico-interpretive practices through which learning subjects might come to recognize and challenge underlying forms of power, interrogate the ‘normalizing’ scenes of dominative representation, and come to better understand the ways identities are produced through routinized practices, unproblematized knowledges, and the various spectacular energies of visual/media culture.

Yet, unlike this character, Jacotot, I took it as axiomatic that an emancipatory pedagogy had to actively site itself within the local world of the learner - within the affective terrain of learners’ immediate, cultural ‘everyday’ (in order to situationally contextualize practices for critically understanding and democratically transforming that everyday). As Grossberg (1989) summarizes this doctrine, ‘a radical pedagogy’, in order to engage with and ‘speak to’ learners, has to ‘locate itself’ within the contradictory and unstably valenced sociocultural landscape in which the learners are themselves ‘invested’, ‘being articulated’, and ‘actively struggling’ (p. 94). My own political imaginary, then, was in part inspired by Peter McLaren’s formula for ‘socio-critical utopian praxis’ - an educational praxis that would, in theory, synchronize the individual construction of critical meanings with collective forms of ethical enunciation and modes of participatory-democratic struggle. This was my language. And in the political

imaginary informed by this language, the transformation of individual/social conditions would, in principle, proceed by way of critically interrogating the hidden mechanisms of power that structure and police identity formation, and naturalize various relations of consumerist desire and social inequality. Here, for McLaren (1995), ‘socio-critical utopian praxis’ means interrogating the ‘false images’ of this democratic everyday in order to reveal, behind the illusions and pretexts of would-be equalizing democratic institutions (i.e., the school, state institutions, mass media), the hidden relations of power that reproduce inequality and hinder the possibility of a real and inhabitable democracy of social equals to come (p. 172).

As it turned out, in the Poland of 1998, at least among my Polish colleagues, uttering a phrase like ‘socio-critical utopian praxis’ wasn’t going to win you a ton of friends. The first step in becoming pedagogically homeless came, then, as an unexpected estrangement from a particular idiom - a way of figuring, framing, and speaking about the world. This meant, finally, the annulment of an archive of ‘utterances’ in which I was theoretically grounded: a language of critique that both informed and legitimated my critical position/practice, or at least provided the subtitles to the educational filmstrip that defined my own critico-emancipatory narratives. In this case, it was a precisely a politicized language of critique, the discourse of engaged ‘border intellectuals’, that sounded - to my Polish colleagues - all too politically familiar (and perhaps too headily constructivist, in the progressive, Utopian-Marxist sense of this word). As my Russian friend Vlad explained to me, ‘you sound commie’. He consoled me with the following reduction: ‘From me, the Poles expect bureaucratic empire; from you, friend, they just want *Boboland* [a new toy store in town]’.

Interestingly, in her own encounters with Eastern European scholars in the 1990s, Susan Buck-Morss (2002) identifies a similar type of discursive vertigo or communicative disconnect. In Buck-Morss' own case, her 'Moscow' counterparts flinched at the Western intellectual Left's critical discourse (with its specific emancipatory-utopian bent and its soft-Marxist idiom). 'They laughed', Buck-Morss recounts, 'when I described our collective erotics as socialist' (p. 253). At the same time, Buck-Morss and Frederick Jameson also signal a clear uneasiness with their Eastern counterparts' seemingly uncritical embrace of Western-capitalist 'democratic freedoms'. As Jameson described this 'narrative' short-circuit between the different speakers:

The East wishes to talk in terms of power and oppression; the West in terms of culture and commodification. There are really no common denominators in this initial struggle for discursive rules, and what we end up with is the inevitable comedy of each side muttering irrelevant replies in its own favourite language. (Frederick Jameson, cited in Buck-Morss, 2002, p. 237)







Figure 1. *Untitled*, James Ciatko (2009) Ink on Paper

In my case, my own interlocutors politely deflected not only the discourse of commodification and culture critique, but also tended to evade all ‘politicized’ talk about ‘power and oppression’ as well. In any case, this communicative disconnect - and for me, it was also a dispossession of a ‘favourite’ language/voice - entailed a gradual slip into doubt, into that aforementioned condition of pedagogical disorientation. Thus, once the ‘hearing aids were turned off’ - this is Jameson’s metaphor - I didn’t say boo.

Secondly, my attempt to situate a pedagogy within the ‘complex and contradictory terrain’ of the students’ own cultural everyday did not, in fact, generate the expected mode of participatory practice wherein that terrain could be mutually explored or creatively negotiated, reconceived or critically transformed. As I projected my own filmstrip in advance, my being an American provided the ideal opportunity for a mode of cross-cultural ‘border’ dialogue. As such, I anticipated a critical dramaturgy where I might be able to subtly leverage a critical orientation - a specific analytical eye, a language of resistance - where I might help (dialogically) unveil the dark side of a nascent democratic universe: the very rapid and seemingly unregulated expansion of Western-capitalist economic relations and cultural practices into post-Soviet Eastern Europe. By situating a critical pedagogy in this new sensorium of shifting codes, intensive aesthetic forces, and incongruous meanings, I could perhaps help reduce the distance between *their* experience of these novel vehicles of capitalist representation and *my* understanding of how those normalizing modes of representation ideologically functioned or aesthetically operated upon the body/desire.

Here, my Russian friend’s diagnosis was a bit off base. While my students did not want *Boboland* from me, they also did not want, as it turned out, to be delivered from *Boboland* either. As I was later informed, they already knew that the images of capital were not, in essence, really so different than the representations, objects, and artefacts of the old regime. The new sensorium was not any more ‘real’ to them than the former social-realist spectacles had been.



In addition, it appeared that they also did not need the various contradictions of that dominative reality ‘negotiated’ with, by, or at them by a well-meaning American in some kind of agitated and bathetic state of cultural disavowal.<sup>3</sup>

Since they were well aware of the local, concrete manifestations of these contradictions, and since my critical orientation (again) emulated a kind of politicized speech they perhaps no longer wanted to hear in schools, the times I trotted out a ‘radical pedagogy’ - even in its most unfinished dialogical forms, and even when I sought to subject the spectacles and mythologies of Western-capitalist mass-media to the most fascinating apparatuses of critical decoding, deconstruction, or detournement - I would be met with the most formidable gesture of Polish student resistance: obstinate, collective silence.

On one hand, it appeared that I had missed the mark in establishing a dynamic, culturally-situated pedagogy, one that might incorporate the texture of their everyday lives, the network of vital meanings in which my students were presumably ‘invested, being articulated, and actively struggling’. Alternately, it could have been the case that I had perhaps hit some kind of curricular mark, but that my students did not want to ‘struggle’ with *me*, and that interrogating the visible and the sayable of their everyday

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<sup>3</sup> Disavowal and repentance, I have noted, defines, for many Americans abroad, a constant state, a constant activity, where one endlessly labors to disidentify one’s own person from various disastrous political & cultural representations that everywhere precede you. To be an American abroad is already to be a villain (or so my German friends assured me). Indeed, if there is a lesson in the films of Lars Von Trier, it is that the naivety of the American is only superseded by his natural lack of innocence, his colonial guile. For someone far more neurotic on this subject than I, see Susan Sontag’s arriere-garde ‘disavowal’ essays in *Where the Stress Falls*, where she berates American culture, American anti-intellectual ‘barbarism’, while at the same time testifying to her own essential, artistic, entirely non-American *Europeanness*, her primary status as a ‘citizen’ of world literature.

was not a pedagogical experience they particularly wanted to share, or felt easy about sharing, aloud. In effect, either I could not ‘home in’ on the complex lifeworld in which they were situated, or they did not want me ‘occupying’ and/or ‘mediating’ their domestic situation, or (perhaps equally plausibly) they simply wanted to get out of the house (*Dom*), that is, connect to different points or experiences beyond the curricular and formal horizons in which I was circumscribing them.

On the other hand, it also occurs to me, retrospectively, that I was perhaps substituting one form of colonial enterprise for another. In promoting a kind of counter-discursive endeavour aimed at critically opposing the new everyday of a post-communist (hyper)reality, I was perhaps continuing a similar colonial venture on a different level. In short, the initialization of students into attitudes and discourses for the democratic critique of Western democracy simply repeated, on a different frequency, the same sort of ‘state-sponsored mind-meld’ associated with Soviet banking education (even if my own mediational forms were presumably, at root, ‘anti-banking’, that is, essentially based on a Freirean ‘maieutics’ for naming the world, for critically-contrasting the ‘feasibility’ of dominant representations, and for dialectically troubling reified perspectives, wrenching at hegemonic forms of consciousness, and so forth and so on).

Nevertheless, years of so-called banking education had already provided my students with enough stubborn techniques for interrupting things, for ‘stalling’ my educational dialectic. Such interruptions also served, simultaneously, to estrange me from my own proper knowledge of things, essentially cracking the confident disposition of ‘mastery’ that would seem to come with ostensibly knowing things, knowing methods, anticipating vectors, ends, possible outcomes. Arguably, nothing is more potent than

*obstinate, collective silence* as a foil for putting on display - or making hearable - the sounds of one's own voice, one's own familiar words or crafty modes of address, devolving into ringing absurdity (where, by having to hear oneself not making sense or not being heard, one's own discursive tape-loops start to sound a bit uncanny, and start to stop being meaningful - even to yourself).

On yet another level, this kind of democratic pedagogy - a participatory method based in speech, in working the interstitial borders of an unfinished, cultural knowledge - did not seem to have, in Poland, the kind of 'natural' traction it did back in the States or West Germany. For one, in Radom, in 1998, any linguistic supererogation displayed by an individual in the classroom - and, in fact, any kind of public performance of intellectual distinction itself - seemed to signify a betrayal of the bond of student community (and that community's solidarity against the instructor-institution-system). This was a cross-cultural warp in the fabric of method, and just one of many<sup>4</sup>. Here, in requiring students to solo, verbally, and to express themselves in certain critically incisive ways, I was asking them, I think, to break this contract with each other (a contract which was, inextricably, a specific tactic of resistance leveled against the institution-system). Open-ended dialogue, dialogical practice itself, in this context, was freighted with an uneasy tension, an almost treacherous sense of class ambivalence.

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<sup>4</sup> Cheating, for example, was much less a moral flaw in Poland than a business-as-usual way of ensuring group survival - a way of getting around the old, heavily fact-based, didactic, memorize-it system that still prevailed. When I observed Polish teachers in action during exams, they seemed, for the most part, to turn a blind eye to all but the most egregious transgressions. Moreover, Polish students seemed endowed with the startling ability to disembodify and throw their 'cheating voices', and thus transmit answers to one another, miraculously, without moving their lips.



More than being geographically on the other side of the world, I found myself uncannily bereft of both (1) a hearable voice and (2) a serviceable method or favorite curriculum, neither (3) knowing the ‘location’ of my students nor (4) the particular ‘conditions’ of their experience, the provenance of a historically-nuanced everyday that was by this point, in my estimation, in no way simply quotidian. </epitasis>



Figure 3. From *In the Faculty Room* (1998-2000) Laminated Watercolor Placemats for Home & Institutional Use

### **Educational Filmstrips: The Theoretical Narrative & its Unraveling**

Up to this now, I have tried to couch a theoretical argument in the form of an empirical, albeit wholly speculative and, for that matter, personal narrative. Furthermore, this story has been presented in an essentially ‘classical realist’ manner, a representational mode that operates, with few real shocks or formal surprises, by

dramatizing actions and events, by ordering narrative elements in a clean, causal continuum leading to an instructive dénouement (knowledge) or some kind of affective response or hoped-for identification.

In her analysis of educational media, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) argues that educational films are dominated by this convention-bound ‘realist’ mode. This ‘fictional’ mode of arranging scenes and emplotting events generates, as Ellsworth continues, predictable ‘Hollywood-style’ filmic structures, where the syntax of images and meanings describe a closed-world defined by an already ‘finished knowledge’, a knowledge that is ‘organized as seamless, uncontested, and already achieved’ (p. 57).

By dint of this mode of presentation, my own narrative account of educational causes and consequences could, of course, be missing much and eliding still more that is (still) not visible to me. As a result, my own story - already drawn (and quartered) from the partiality of diffused memories - is certainly extruding entirely different fields of possible visibility, sayability, and meaning<sup>5</sup>. This is what theoretical filmstrips do more generally: every explanatory narrative, every forceful voicing of a reality or a (critical) truth, implies the implicit displacement or voiding of countless other figures, countless other knowable worlds/realities. This is one aspect, I think, of what Foucault means when he says that ‘theory’ can be a form of ‘violence’.

At another level, however, my narrative stresses a discomfiting breakdown in the syntax of my own critico-scientific educational filmstrip. I guess you could say I’m recounting a short story about the shortcomings of pedagogical-theoretical narratives

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<sup>5</sup> I’ve never yet, as I keep finding out, ever been ‘right’ about anything, so why should I start ‘being right’ now...



themselves. More than that, I am emphasizing specific ruptures in my own anticipated sequence of events, a scrambling in the logic of cause-and-effect that organized the filmstrip in which I myself was emplotted, or in which I had theoretically and discursively emplotted myself (or, in turn, was tacitly emplotting learning others). *Now*, however, this personal/theoretical filmstrip was melting, curling up before my eyes, as most filmstrips tend to do when faced with too much light or heat, or too much scorching particularity.

So what comes next in the arrangement of (educational) scenes and images? How does the story end? And how are learning moments - aesthetic events - constructed and presented to a spectator so as to accomplish 'knowledge', or obtain a calculated outcome for my readers?

In the Aristotelian (or 'Hollywood') regime of the poetic/mimetic arts, the ordering of actions and events is, as Ellsworth points out, largely convention-bound. Imagery or descriptive elements are subordinate to actions and thus serve speech (story). The logic of 'speech-events' itself drives the narrative system forward, linking figures and moments together in the service of some final 'end' (*catastasis, catharsis, closure, order-returned*, etc.). As Ellsworth points out, classical realism defines a specific, rule-bound 'way of making and doing' the arts. This system of artistic representation renders actions in ways that are appropriate to the work's specific genre, enjoining visible events and (audience) epiphanies in a progressive, linear fashion. As Rancière continues the argument, in the Aristotelian system of 'the arts', representation is determined *in advance* by formal 'rules' and constraints. Only certain subjects are representable, and if they are representable, they are representable in certain admissible ways (according to the formal

rules of the genre). In this system, the ‘representative primacy of action over characters or of narration over description’ functions under the command of ‘the art of speaking, of speech in actuality’ (PA, 22). Moreover, governed at once by speech acts and story-telling, classical-realist representation is also determined by a lawful mode of address. This mode of address, of speaking *to*, emulates a relation of communication that connects an authorial intention (artistic will) to a known spectator in the service of achieving unequivocal effects/affects for an ‘identifiable’ audience/class.

In this representational regime, a consequence or effect (of what came *before*) can be predicted to the extent that the classical realist filmstrip adheres to established artistic norms and teleological conventions. Rhetorically (or perhaps curricularly), known origins (*protasis*) genetically anticipate planned outcomes (*catastasis*). As Rancière maintains, this poetic logic is characterized by a ‘concordance’ between ‘sense and sense’: the synchronization of what’s *sensible* (felt) with what *sense* can be made of it.

As Ellsworth argues in educational contexts, educational films obey a narrative logic of (implicit) speech where ‘cause-and-effect chains of events’ lead to the work’s intended, organic conclusion, its instructive realization. Structurally-speaking, the classical-realist representation sequences specific (rhetorical) forms and elements so as to obtain a planned intellectual effect or reproduce a model competency in a community of spectators.

In educational media/films that deploy these Hollywood-style modes of re/presentation, Ellsworth isolates the underlying educational assumptions that inform this Aristotelian staging. First, there is a known/knowable audience that is solicited by the

work. Secondly, as system of address, the film itself functions and transmits *like* speech. The work's very mode of presentation (its techniques, or ways of making and doing) conforms to the expected place, stage, or condition of particular addressees in a known social-educative order. The formal operations of the work address - or solicit - the will of a known spectator, and in the fashion of a speech-event that is intended to enlighten or move an audience in an expected and, by implication, evaluable way.

Rancière emphasizes that the Aristotelian regime, the 'representative regime', was 'based on a definite idea of the speech-act. Writing *was* speaking [just as a picture expressed or quoted a tell-able story]. And speaking was viewed as the act of the orator who is persuading an assembly (even though there was no assembly). The representational power of doing art with words was bound up with the power of a social hierarchy based on the capacity of addressing appropriate kinds of speech-acts to appropriate kinds of audiences' (PL,14).

Ellsworth draws similar conclusions about how educational media function, and how they get the last word. Filmic modes mediate an 'oratorical will' that deploys a mode of address that both 'solicits' and 'persuades' learners. Via this mediational logic, certain 'fictionalized' aims (cognitive-critical or moral-practical outcomes) are thereby, in principle, obtained. Ellsworth continues the argument by stating that the aesthetic 'engine' (that propels one's 'learning story' forward) 'consistently turns out to be an expert', the specialist who 'interventionally' addresses, persuades, causally-links specific events/acts with their 'consequences', or otherwise 'moves' bodies and understandings forward. 'Characters' and, by implication, learner-spectators 'are moved from a state of ignorance to a state of enlightenment only as a result of the expert's intervention' - be it

in the intra-diegetic form of the expert who ‘stars’ in the educational work, or as a non-diegetic intercession by some authorial speaker in disembodied ‘voice-over’ (p. 56).

Ellsworth caps this argument by stating that the very structure of these mediating forms of dramatization tacitly pursues two ends. First, an ‘already-achieved’ knowledge is singularly and monologically accreted: the model is reproduced. Second, ‘experts’ are enshrined as the ‘primary causal agents [of learning]. Educational films must convince viewers that the kind of knowledge possessed by the experts is different from that of the other characters, and better. This [tacit lesson] is supported structurally by the norms of Hollywood-like storytelling’ (p. 57). In this educational poetics, one form of disciplinary knowing (using expert discourse) supplants or contravenes ‘other ways’ of everyday knowing or storying things.

Enacting a classical-realist grammar, Ellsworth refers to pedagogical dramatizations that operate by ‘breaking processes and objects down into stages and elements’, and by identifying ‘underlying causal and structural relationships’ (p. 54-61). This enlightening form of pedagogical dramatization is rule-bound: the film mediates - organizes time, space, and sensible moments - in *certain* strategic ways: there is a gradual presentation and unveiling of ‘secrets’, a formatting and displaying of signs and images and social/ethical realities, with the ‘understanding’ of all these elements ‘organized according to stages...discrete parts, sequential relationships, and in linear, chronological order’ (p. 54).

Ellsworth is, ostensibly, interrogating a dramaturgy associated with educational media. As I see it, she’s drawing an allegory of pedagogy itself, metaphorically linking

one mode of mediated educational experience to everyday educational assumptions, forms, and practices. As an allegory of 'education', commonplace pedagogical forms/practices enact these same mediating artifices, suturing learners into a prevailing logic of 'school' experience (as well as integrating teachers, positionally, as those who 'mediate' and 'storyboard' that educational process). In short, what I think Ellsworth is suggesting is that this 'aesthetic form' or 'mediational' logic *is* education, or at least defines a commonplace pedagogical dramaturgy. I would further suggest that this basic presentational logic is both active in, and informative of, our most commonplace assumptions about learning and, indeed, our most foundational educational structures (including critico-pedagogical narratives and their associated emancipatory architectures).

Inextricably, then, there is also the theoretical filmstrip that rolls before the master's own eyes. This is the film in which he or she, as professor or instructor, performatively 'stars'. With this starring occupation comes a narrative set of educational givens that endlessly maintains and reconfirms this (Hollywood) regime of re/presentation as the 'smart' one, or even the only one (with its various theatricalized roles, its privileged positions and subordinate relations, its ways of ordering the times, spaces and experiences of 'learning' - on the way to competency).

As a form of aesthetic education, so to speak, the syntax of mediations defines a way of linking environmental contingencies - sequences of visibility and sayability - and of ordering educative means toward a consensually-anticipated pedagogical end that is, as it were, an 'already achieved' knowledge (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 57). At the same time, then, this aesthetic 'engine' remains a dominant dramatic model informing common

theoretical narratives and 'Hollywood-style' constructs about educational 'roles' themselves.

At issue is how educational films - as aesthetic operations - reflect or define processes of learning, as well as (re)enact classroom positions, possible capacities, and given role-relations. In Ellsworth's analysis, the 'subjects' of education(al films) always 'suffer from a double lack: lack of information about a particular subject, issue, or process *plus* lack of knowledge about how to use or interpret that information properly' (p. 56). This double-lack is reduced, developmentally, by the teacher: the expert codifies the knowledge to be known, organizing a theoretical-dramatic understanding of the situation and the specific means of its solution-resolution. At the same time, this founding 'double-lack' installs a 'causal' dependence upon the expert to transform lack into a known gain, thereby reducing the inequality. The expert thus illuminates or unchains, critically enlightens or dramaturgically uncovers 'secrets' at the 'right [causal] moment'. The educator knows what the learner does not know, but also knows that the learner does not know *how* to know (yet) - can't 'use or interpret information properly'.

As an educative point of departure, this 'not yet' implies a double-lack of capacity. Basic ignorance or non-knowledge is compounded by an essential incapacity to *know how to know*. The medium, in this respect, is the message: its *process* prefigures in advance an essential gap or inequality - not simply a gap between ignorance and knowledge - but also between two *ways* of knowing: the (better) methods of science and the (worse) ways of everyday storying or acting. 'The dramatization thus organizes knowledge in such a way as to accommodate and reproduce the privileging of expert, scientific knowledge', dramatically contrasting that 'better' disciplinary method with its

bricolage-and-magpie other: that is, involved, ‘practical, intuitive, everyday knowledge’ (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 57) that has not been reduced (or converted) to the purely discursive-disciplinary forms of the science.

This ‘Hollywood’ process implies that scenes can be presented in an orderly fashion so as to causally reduce or ameliorate a known deficit. The teleological structure linking Aristotelian primary causes, proximate mediations, and final ends is thus redrawn as a linear constructivism of cognitive outcomes and/or critical-practical knowledges.<sup>6</sup> And if the medium is the message, and even if students do not ‘get’ the superficial lesson/message of the educational drama, they may nevertheless come to understand a more fundamental lesson that is coextensive with the medium itself: that they can’t understand without guidance or expert mediation.

While Ellsworth uses ‘Hollywood-style’ filmic operations as a metaphorical touch point, the classical-realist structure of education(al films) is not a by-product of the age of Hollywood. For example, Aquinas takes this Aristotelian system and formalizes it as commonplace logic of learning. Importantly, Aquinas’ own scholastic inquiry is based on a single question: *Can one man teach another?* Anticipating progressive/constructivist pedagogies by centuries, Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica* (1999) describes a similar Hollywood-style dramaturgy in which a contiguous series of dialectical mediations link what is experienced with science: what can be understood - when, where, how, by whom, and with who’s intermediary support). For Aquinas, knowledge forms (*Scientiarum*

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<sup>6</sup> Massumi (2002) evokes (in a different context) the intersection of aesthetic/dramatic and pedagogical meanings, here, when he writes: ‘Taken in general, [the perceptible] thing becomes the object of a set of regularized...connections systematized in such a way as to ensure the maximum repeatability of the largest number of actions with the maximum uniformity of results. Predictability: *anticipation* perfected’ (pp. 93-94).

*Semina* - the DNA strands of mature, consensual understanding) already pre-exist *in potentia* in the ‘primary’ (educational) causes-origins. The ‘understanding’ is thus progressively scaffolded and predictably activated through increasingly complex encounters with the sensible presentations. Like the rhetorical elements of classical-realist poetics, education assumes a *protasis* (planting the organic ‘seeds’ of a singular narrative), stages an *epitasis* (which grows and intensifies the action), leading logically to a *catastasis* (which genetically resolves a situation into an enlightening, morally-instructive, or restoratively purgative end).

In Aquinas’ scholastic method, understanding is brought into teleological ‘perfection’ by a ‘proximate external agent’ (an interventional actor) who progressively reduces the gap between ‘what is known’ and ‘things not yet known’. Invoking various medical metaphors that associate teaching with healing, Aquinas extrapolates Aristotle’s logic of ‘entelechy’ to the space/time of learning and teaching. Paralleling the classical-realist ‘engine’, Aquinas sums up a constructivist path where learning is understood as an accretive process of ‘proximate’ links (contiguous zones of proximal increase) leading to the ‘discovery’ of a *latent* knowledge (that is then realized in its mature form by the learner). ‘In light of this, one is said to *teach another* when he makes clear through certain signs the path [*discursum*] of reasoning he himself took... The teacher’s presentations are like tools the student uses to come to an understanding of things previously unknown to him’ (Aquinas, 1998, p. 199).

As Ellsworth suggests, this Aristotelian logic, its artful mode of aesthetic scaffolding, is not just the labor of the ancients. Additionally, I am suggesting - based on my own story above - that this same classical-realist motor is ubiquitous in contemporary



forms of education, driving not just progressive modes of socio/constructivism, but also propelling commonplace critical pedagogies as well.

To sketch a further link to my story, I'd like to contrast my own emancipatory filmstrip with Paulo Freire's in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006), particularly where he formats a critical-utopian praxis whose point of departure is set in the educator coming to understand a (foreign) community's objects and experiences. In order to interrogate and overcome forms of oppression, literacy-learning is situated in a world of close-at-hand objects and familiar needs, and in the specific relations of oppression that define a particular community. In Freire's method, teachers move into a village, identifying 'important issues', orienting literacy-learning 'through' or 'around' words that matter socially or politically (*water-well, debt, interest, patron*).

In this local context, Freire's pedagogy *begins* by setting into play a relationship between a 'real' and a 'potential' consciousness. As both a supposition about the learner's 'place' and as navigational compass, a distance is established between two distinct modes of awareness: there is, on one hand, a 'mystified' (real) consciousness and, on the other, a 'critical-social' (potential) understanding. While Freire insists that the 'critical consciousness' cannot be simply 'imposed', the distance between the real and the potential can be tactically reduced. Freire's pedagogy (i.e., conscientization) pivots on the gradual transformation of the real consciousness (of the socially embedded agent) into the potential consciousness (of an agent that understands the words-world of oppression). Through this technique, literacy-learning, the understanding of oppression, and world-transformative action can, *in theory*, all be brought into harmonic coincidence.

Here, in the village of the other, so Freire argues, an emancipator must ‘trust’ the people. But in this relation of trust, one must trust in the peoples’ future or ‘potential consciousness’ (p. 169). The potential, as an object worthy of trust, is set in opposition to what can’t be trusted: the real consciousness of a present learner/mind that unwittingly accepts oppression. This evokes a Gramscian concept of hegemony in which the dominated willfully, even eagerly, participate in the project of their own oppression, unconsciously reproducing ‘colonial’ relations of domination or uncritically accepting the enticements that exploitation offers to ensure the peoples’ servility and/or complicity. Complicating things, the teacher begins with the assumption that the ‘oppressor’ is insidiously ‘housed’ in the ‘real’ consciousness of the people who are the objects of liberation (p. 169). More than simply a form of lack or ignorance, and thus ‘housed’ in the people themselves, these forms of oppression must be progressively banished from the inside out (by the thought from the outside).

Pivoting on the classical-realist mode, the ‘untested feasibility’ of the real consciousness, its uncritical acceptance of the state-of-affairs, must be artfully thrown into relief by ‘selected contradictions’ in order to engender ‘the potential’ consciousness. The potential is strategically obtained when *serialized* codifications (images) have been ‘decoded’ or ‘unveiled’, and the real consciousness, its state of misrecognition, is incrementally ‘superseded’ by gradually clearer forms of awareness (p. 114). In this project, the educator is a ‘stimulating’ agent situated at an ever-restaged point of pedagogical leveraging, a ‘proximal external agent’ who helps learners bridge known gaps, collaboratively ‘relearning’ with the student (what the teacher already more or less knows, or anticipates, by way of an ‘educational plan’). Again, this dramaturgy

constructs a continuum of chronological ‘leverage points’ between a given ‘here’ (distorted awareness/non-awareness) and a ‘there’ (undistorted awareness), even in the absence of ‘imposed’, direct speech.

Freire (2006) calls this procedure ‘feasibility testing’ (p. 115), the testing or problematization of misrecognized situations (defined as doxa, false appearance, or the oppressor ‘housed’ inside the head of the other). The realization of the potential consciousness is attained through a specific sequencing of sensible images, or dialectically-posed circumstances. As Freire elaborates, by scaffolding images/situations, and then through ‘decoding’ of what’s codified in the sequence, critical knowledge and perception is, by the student, ‘self-unveiled...the new perception and knowledge are systematically continued with the inauguration of the educational plan, which transforms the untested feasibility into testing-action [problem-posing], as potential consciousness supersedes real consciousness’ (p. 115). While not, strictly speaking, banking education, there are clearly rules to the game: ‘The first requirement is that these codifications [pictures] must necessarily represent situations *familiar* to the individuals whose thematics are being examined, so that they can easily recognize the situations (and thus their own relations to them). It is inadmissible to present pictures of reality unfamiliar to the participants. The latter procedure [the presentation of the *unfamiliar*] cannot precede the more basic one dictated by the participant’s state of submersion [i.e., mystification], that is, the process in which individuals analyzing their own reality become aware of the prior, distorted perceptions’ (p. 114).

In this socioconstructivist alternative to banking education, Freire contravenes the ‘living voice’, the direct impositional speech, of a top-down Platonic interlocutor-

liberator. Here, as a form of critical pedagogy, the transmissional role of the banking master is interrogated, and the emancipatory educator is reconceived as an ‘indirect’ stimulating agent (a mediator of proximal relations) in a dramaturgy of scaffolded ‘self-unveilings’. The emancipatory educator enters the village in order to ‘relearn’ what the students learn in collaborative and coincident parallel with the learners. Nevertheless, the classical-realist structure of representation remains in place: the arrangement of pictures recapitulates the same classical-realist filmic operations, *as well as* the same oratorical modes of address that strive to locate and solicit specific learners in recognized sociocultural conditions - in this case, different levels of ‘submersion’. The objective is to find learners in known ‘places’ of learning (stages in a continuum that defines the path [*discursum*] between the *real-now* and *future-potential*).

This mediational form repeats the Aristotelian ‘engine’. This process of so-called ‘self-unveiling’ is, strictly speaking, identical with the ‘guile’ of a dramaturge who scripts scenes or ‘dialogical moments’ in proximal succession, from ‘the familiar’ to what ‘can’ be apprehended, what comes next in the frame, where superfluous visibilities and sayabilities are ‘inadmissible’ precisely because they do not link up with what is most proximal, most socially ‘real’ to learners, or most ‘easily recognizable’. Critico-dialogical practices, then, do not escape this aesthetic-cinematic ‘engine’ precisely because they delimit possible horizons of visibility or sayability - even in the absence of direct speech. They implicitly - and developmentally - make certain kinds of speech (or speakers) recognizable or hearable, while containing or displacing other perspectives or ways of naming or doing things.

As Jennifer Eisenhauer (2005) points out, even though critical pedagogies may openly repudiate ‘transmission’, ‘bombardment’ and ‘monologically’ outcome-based paradigms, the critical educator nevertheless tacitly stands in a state of arrival, with the students ‘always on the way’ toward that ‘arrival’ - toward coincidence, toward an implicit entelechy of critical ends: in this way, students and teachers are ‘homogenized’ into fixed ‘categories’ and associated ‘roles’ (p. 165). All of this I suggested in relation to my own village practice, where one colonial enterprise was substituted for another, and where the emancipatory counter-discourse enacted another form of violence on a different frequency. In critical or uncritical contexts, educators *do* the same things: they mediate or progressively unveil secrets in an orderly fashion where - as ‘proximate external agents’ - they slyly a/bridge known gaps between known stages of ignorance and competency, between distorted perceptions and potentially ‘good’ ones, that is, ones that are hearable within the critical ‘path’ (*discursum*).

While Ellsworth explores this aesthetic logic in terms of ‘structures of dramatization’ in educational films, Ivan Illich (1971) points out that this ‘engine’ is not reducible to educational media alone: ‘Schools are designed on the assumption that there is a secret to everything in life; that the quality of life depends on knowing that secret; that secrets can be known only in orderly succession, and that only teachers can properly reveal these secrets’ (p. 108). But here, rather than see critical pedagogy as the solution to oppressive, ideological, or culturally-reproductive forms of dominant schooling, I’m suggesting that it may be more useful to see how and where these putatively opposing pedagogies are in fact similar - do the same things, reiterate the same theatrical role-relations, restage the same embodied theater. And these relations and forms are inhabited

and repeated in our most common ways of teaching others - are sited and recited in the scenographic organization of events, in predictable chains of 'cause-and-effect' that genetically lead a learner from a 'here' (a known 'double-lack') to a 'there' (a cumulative redress of that double-lack). In these pedagogical roles, and in the *relational* positions defined by those starring roles, it may be that an ingrained 'history' of mastery and servility is thus enacted and perpetuated. This is one of the key concerns of this thesis: How to break - aesthetically - out of a history of epistemological violence that, as Patti Lather (1991) suggests, 'perpetuates relations of dominance' *through* the 'very effort to liberate' (p. 16).



Figure 4. Highball Coaster from *In the Faculty Room* (1998-2000)

## **Aesthetic Disorder: The Border Intellectual at Sea**

*The possibility of difference is the prerequisite for critical thinking, which, distinct from science, is not content to identify what is - Susan Buck-Morss, Dreamworld and Catastrophe*

So what comes next in the syntax of (educational) scenes and (theoretical) images? And how does the narrative end once the filmstrip itself has unraveled? Following Ellsworth's analysis, once the Aristotelian ordering of narrative events and actions has been troubled, other aesthetic-mediational opportunities become available. By breaking with the Aristotelian system, then, it is possible to disrupt my own tragic narrative, here, by presenting a radically 'indifferent' image - a description portraying a simple 'presence', a kind of picture evoking the dense, everyday texture of things: thus, a meaningless 'punctum' of visual intensity that contributes nothing (oratorically) to my story. For example, an image - say, a whorl of chalk dust suspended in late fall sunlight, perhaps offset, in angular shadow, by one of those severe little Polish crucifixes fixed above every chalkboard. As such, this image suspends or interrupts my misadventures' story-board of scenes, its proper order of filmic 'speech-events', standing even as obstacle to the story, in detriment to narrative orders and scaffolded ends.

This image is - a bit like my Polish students - mute, obstinately silent. Similarly, by remaining mute it is indifferent to, and perhaps disruptive of, narrative scaffolding or educative film-stripping. The image sets into play a different way of arranging things, a different use of time and space, and a different relation of words to things. Drained of authorial intention and indifferent to any known auditor/audience, this image, presence, or intensive 'punctum' would, by simply portraying or depicting, also refuse to 'move' or

‘instruct’ or ‘make you understand’. In contrast to classical-realist filmic emplotments, the image imposes a different logic of the experience, where expressivity indicates a kind of incompleteness that allows the image to be taken, lifted, and (re)translated. Like a cinematic frame extracted from a movie reel, it solicits nobody in particular and there are no rules determining the image’s admissibility, or how it might be translated or rethreaded by a spectator. Detached from any Hollywood-style mode of address or ‘rules of art’, this image has neither an understanding appropriate to it, nor an intention to be realized. For example, in Terrence Malick’s Hollywood, these kinds of cellular moments are, arguably, the real subjects of his movies, where a purely descriptive background - a visual fragment or sensational intensity - comes close to superseding the narrative foreground of actions, in turn suspending the relation of pedagogical concordance linking sense (what is felt) with what sense (understanding) can be made of it.

In any case, the transmissional vector - the relationship of an authorial (speaking) *will* to a locatable, spectatorial *will* - is interrupted. The reader/spectator is separated and divided from the intentional speech act of the ‘proximal external agent’. This aesthetic logic can be seen to oppose, or at least splinter, the classical-realist engine with a different ‘logic of the sensible’, a mediational logic that confounds (or at least remains uninterested in) teleological scaffolding.

So, what about my misadventure? At any rate, by now I am at the *catastasis* (catastrophe) part of my story. Convention would dictate some kind of recognition at this point, leading, then, to transformative knowledge with some sense of closure and/or an ameliorating message: thus, a ‘happy ending’ appended by the explanatory voice-over of educational science (*ala* Hollywood) or, perhaps, the cathartic cleansing away of that



hubristic/diseased 'border intellectual'. Whatever the case, I better get to my *catastasis* quick or somebody is going to get mad at me.

If I edited into this sequence a scene of me accepting some letter of recognition from the Polish Ministry of Education on Teacher's Day (ironically, one of those old socialist holidays celebrating certain glorious workers), you might anticipate that I, like Jacotot, had arrived some kind of theoretical 'recognition' or focusing *peripeteia*. That dramatic expectation would be wrong because, disabused of both critical language and satisfying narrative, I wasn't in a position to theorize my way out of a paper bag. The reason I received the 'letter' was not because I was an educational shock-worker; it was simply, I think, just a friendly bit payback for have written a modest grant for a computer-Internet lab for the college.

Yet, this computer lab turned out to be a rather fortuitous happenstance, at least for me and my Writing classes, in determining a *general* state of pedagogical homelessness. As such, it was the accident - a concrete apparatus with screens - that *divided* what the students were *doing* from my own interventions (as well as from all those cross-culturally anxious moments noted above). I'm not going to aggrandize this story with momentous results (as in almost every movie starring teachers). Simply put, instead of my endlessly connecting-the-dots in a criticalizing 'place-based' 'border negotiation', people were working in this computer lab, simply designing and decorating an online literary journal, exploring a then still-novel technology and navigating whatever distant hypertextual landscapes they might glimpse, stumble into, or accidentally alight upon. And this they did in large part without my ministrations. I'm not sure what people *understood*, exactly, but they did *do* a lot of things, things like experiment with a mouse

for the first time, compose works of short fiction and poetry, do ‘real’ interviews, formulate critical essays, write up local art-exhibition reviews, compose Malick-style literary ‘presences’ based on art images or musical soundscapes, scan and upload pictures/student art, fabricate images and journal logos, and so on. Published online, it wasn’t great. But it looked fairly ‘real’ as far as such things go, and their work occupied the same landscape as those other more serious sites and journals the students had earlier explored.

In *The Nights of Labor*, Rancière dedicates only a few brief paragraphs to the odd method of Joseph Jacotot, summarizing Jacotot’s ‘universal teaching’ as:

...a maieutics without guile...[hinging on] a means of self-instruction without a teacher, hence the means to teach others what you yourself do not know, in accordance with the principle of ‘intellectual equality’...The grand principle of the Jacotot method was ‘learn something and relate everything else to it’. It obviously clicked with the real-life experience of people who had picked up fragments [of learning]...detached articles of a strange but precious encyclopedia, one of no use except to offer ‘false notions about real life - or, perhaps, true notions about the falsity of this life. (NL, p. 52)

To teach ‘without guile’ - this is how Rancière describes the seemingly unfeasible (though quite successful) efforts of an illiterate mother to teach her own child how to read and write. ‘Without knowing it’, she emulates the method devised by Jacotot: instead of (re)mediation (this, for sure, she cannot do), her son has to connect and compare distant things: he has to ‘learn something’ and, under his own power, ‘relate everything else to it’. To teach ‘without guile’ means, on one hand, to have one’s own pedagogical filmstrip unravel. But this is not just the teachers’ own filmstrip. It is also the filmic operations, the aesthetic education, which would incorporate learners into a dramaturgy characterized, in the first instance, by the inaugural ‘double-lack’: an assumed non-knowledge that is

compounded by an assumed incapacity to know how to know, where these two lacks (together) are surmounted by pedagogical ‘guile’, that is, by the incremental interventions and well-timed ‘voice-overs’ of the knowing interlocutor.

In *The Nights of Labor*, the point of filmic unraveling begins, however, with a reversal of the orienting ‘scholastic’ question: *Can one man teach another?* In this reversal, Jacotot upends the scholastic order/method by asking a new opening question: *Can someone teach themselves?*

In this book about the self-emancipation of 19<sup>th</sup> Century workers, Rancière is already testifying to a filmic rupture in this same classico-realist engine (described by Ellsworth), where pedagogical mediation - as well as the positions of ‘intellectual inequality’ formally continued through that mediating logic - are (by chance or necessity) discontinued. The aesthetic and pedagogical logic of the filmstrip is annulled by the unlikely fact of auto-didacticism, the fact that people are *always already* doing and learning without an instructor or ‘proximal’ guidance. For the want of a teacher, or due to the necessity of having to teach oneself, or by dint of the desire of an illiterate mother, these autodidactic ‘proofs’ confirmed the possibility of a different way. People learned or, in Jacotot’s idiom, they liberated themselves, precisely because they were ignorant of, and so free to ignore, this supposed ‘double-lack’. Having no reason to believe in essential deficits that would make learning an *effect* of teaching, expertise, or mastery, they had no reason to capitulate their capacity to learn, know, or do to the ‘engines’ of enlightenment.

In *The Nights of Labor*, Rancière identifies a paradox in the word ‘emancipation’ itself: emancipation is a ‘divided’ word that opens onto two different - even contrasting - vistas: ‘The very same word, emancipation, is used to denote the advancement of the individual worker who sets up on his own and the deliverance of the oppressed proletariat’ (NL, 32). This second idiom, emancipation as deliverance, adheres to a Kantian paradigm of education where ‘freedom’ is set in a paradoxical relation to the agent who acts *upon*, who liberates the unfree. Kant (1904) thus designs his own educational puzzle by asking, ‘How am I to develop a sense of freedom in spite of the restraint?’ or ‘How can the teacher *compel* the will while fitting it to use its liberty?’ (p. 34). Within the Kantian *Kuddelmuddel*, the ignorant/dependent minority must always be shifted toward freedom by a knowing/mature agent who understands the situation and can anticipate the emancipatory effect of their own guiding (unfettering) acts. In the logic of deliverance, a relation of inequality is first presupposed - be it the relation between a teacher and a learner, or between a political vanguard and oppressed social minority (workers).

But freedom and enlightenment are defined, as Kant himself acknowledges, as a capacity of thought or action ‘without guidance’, without proximal determination or scaffolding. Yet by axiomatically starting with ignorance, unfreedom, or social minority (*Unmundigkeit*), what is always paradoxically required is the *causative* pedagogical event that leads the ‘unfree’ *toward* autonomy, or toward a critical ‘understanding’ about their unfreedom (in order to make them mature/conscious agents capable of changing their world). As Lather (1991) diagrams this paradox, contemporary everyday pedagogies (sustained by Enlightenment discourse and social institutions) are still largely permeated

by a 'light-based' metaphor of knowledge transmission, one which 'positions the emancipator as sender and the emancipated as receiver of rays' (p. 4). If enlightenment is about 'the way out', then 'education' is the institutional vehicle to 'lead out', or to reconcile the given fact of the minority with the ideal of the people/democracy to come. The logic of 'deliverance' (inscribed into the operational, filmic heart of this system) ensures the indefinite reproduction of relations of inequality between senders and receivers, those who act and those who are acted upon, emancipators and the 'mute' objects of emancipation.

Opposing the logic of deliverance and double-lack, Rancière explores the *other* meaning of the word emancipation: 'the individual who sets up on his own', or 'sets out' on a path of experience and learning that is their own path. Lather articulates Rancière's 'other' sense of emancipation almost verbatim: Emancipation 'is a process one undertakes for oneself; it is not something done "to" or "for" someone' (p. 4). On this path, there is no 'pathway to liberty', as it is only ever enacted and traveled 'by individuals who have already been liberated' (NL, 67), that is, by individuals who have liberated themselves while - or as a result of - 'disincorporating' themselves from the machineries of progressive deliverance. In *The Nights*, disincorporation meant declining matriculation into Saint-Simonian worker communities, Fourierist worker utopias, or the social-scientific vanguardisms of the day, which all delegated to themselves the role of planning, thinking, and speaking for oppressed bodies caught in the (tread)mills of necessity and reproduction: thus, 'unfree' bodies who, by definition, were not in a position to think or assume a voice - or properly perceive the *underlying* conditions of things which, as such, maintained the worker's in 'submersion' (by structuring their

necessary *misrecognition* of fundamental material/social processes and ‘real’ states-of-affairs).

However, in this *other* impoverished and impossible space of emancipated learning - a space of chance books and discontinuous moments - a ‘scrap of leisure’ might be coupled with ‘scraps’ of words or the accidental pictures of a different life, composing a magpie curriculum of the unfamiliar and the random. In this impossible space of emancipated learning, Rancière thus describes how workers availed themselves of derelict books or took old periodicals (used for packaging up food products) and avidly refunctioned them into literary image-texts for learning. In this wayward, bricolage zone of improvisational learning, there could be no proper sequence of talents, no accretion of proper knowledge leading toward an ‘end’ competency, next-stage, or collective outcome. Without the ‘luxury’ of professors and progressive interventions, writes Rancière, there were only the ‘incandescences’ of ‘night’, of ‘dead time’, or of ‘stolen moments’ at work, where fragments of foreign forms of life - ‘glimpses of another world, a world of nature, or a world in shop windows’ (NL, 108) - might be seen, learned and heuristically related to what one knew, then unlinked or imitatively (re)assembled into new and unforeseen mosaics. Even without a teacher to explain their meanings, such ‘incandescences’ could offset the self-evidence of things, the naturalness of given roles and situations. Instead of the teacher’s planned catharsis, as it were, there were occasions for *ekstasis* - for standing outside of oneself; for being more than one’s ‘natural’ role.

In this story, the *worker*, the ‘commoner aware of his place and role in the social order’ as ‘*only*’ a worker, encountered a different type of community, a community of intelligence that had nothing to do, in the final analysis, with one’s rank in the given

social order, one's 'thinking' status/place or class identity (NL, 52). As Rancière remarks, these workers were not taking the given hierarchy of 'class divisions' as a reference point for social struggle or resistance, but were encountering other, far-flung '*forms of existence*', that is, encountering words and fictions about equality or freedom or of a excitedly 'romantic' social disorder, and thus experiencing different ways to 'aestheticize' their lives, multiply their subject positions - *in the doing* (NL, 95). Aestheticizing one's life, in this case, doesn't mean taking your turtle, the one with the ruby-studded carapace, out on a walk in the park for art's sake. It means, rather, supplementing - and thereby splitting - one's singular classification, one's expected status or 'normal' subject position as 'worker only'. Aestheticization, in this sense, implied challenging a supposed material necessity, the naturalness of orders and roles, with 'false notions about real life' or 'true notions about the falsity of this life' (NL, 52) - or at any rate, with images and figures that offered 'the model of an action freed from the chain of necessity' (NL, 180). True or false, for the self-taught worker, Jeanne Deroin, the experience of understanding oneself as a 'thinking' agent defined 'less a body of knowledge than a belief, less the foundations of a new science of the world or society than the first link of a new chain of relations between beings' (NL, 111) - a lateral thread of relations describing an extant community, an 'egalitarian community', both sharing and demonstrating the same equal capacity to learn, know, act, imagine, and express what they thought.

In Rancière's story, the workers who used their 'nights' or stolen, incandescent moments to dream, paint, or write poetry were workers who had already 'divided' themselves from their one-and-only status as 'worker': they had 'disidentified' with an

‘identity’ as a social-intellectual subordinate within a seemingly self-evident, hierarchal Chain of Being (or as Lukács would later rephrase this distribution of bodies, a world of hand-workers and head-workers). Significantly, for Rancière, these uneducated (or rather, un-pedagogicized) worker-painters, worker-poets or ‘plebian philosophers’ cobbled together a mature poetry that described the vital ‘rhythms’ and experiences of their times *even before* they could properly ‘write’. Whether or not a person could write or compose ‘well’, they were already *really* doing it, participating in the poetic construction of a world, and engaged (equally) in framing out the representations, images, or dreams of (possible) worlds to come.

For Rancière, this kind of poetic doing was indicative of a ‘rupture’ that - in act - erased the dividing line between those who think and those who do not, between those who play (with objects, signs, and images) and those supposedly destined to a monochrome world of manual labor and cheap beer. By already doing and ‘really’ creating, Rancière’s workers suspended - in act - the hierarchal opposition between ‘two humanities’ founded upon ‘two forms of sensibility’ (AD, 41). As Rancière clarifies this act, working class (self)emancipation (in *The Nights*) pivoted not on writing about or coming to better understand local ‘worker culture’ and ‘oppression’, but pivoted instead on a ‘symbolic rupture’ with the laddering of social classifications that would ‘naturally’ separate those of ‘intellectual leisure’ from those of ‘productive necessity’ (SP, 55, PP, 219).

The unfamiliar or accidental constellations of other worlds were, in Rancière’s story, precisely those aesthetic intervals that allowed these worker-poets and worker-philosophers to distinguish the arbitrary of their own world, the very *contingency* of ‘this



life'. As Rancière continues this argument, 'the poetry of the workers was not at first the echo of popular speech but the imitation of the sacred language, the forbidden and fascinating language of [distant] others. This was all the more so for the worker-authors who spurned the advice of their literary patrons to write about what they knew (or were supposed to know) - the world of work and oppression' (NL, xxviii-xxix). The imitation of fascinating and far-flung others, then, revealed to workers that they were the same, could do the same things, were equal in capacity to think and represent. In turn, what these workers-learners spurned was that which was closest to them, that is, what their patrons assumed they could talk about - what was putatively most important to understanding and overcoming 'their' class oppression. Against any far-seeing political avant-gardism that, in naming itself the thinking and planning organ of the exploited classes, Rancière's workers - by simply thinking, imitating, acting, and (artistically) creating - enacted a 'rupture in the traditional division [the inegalitarian *partage* or 'distribution'] assigning the privilege of thought to some and the tasks of production to others' (PP, 219).

This way of experiencing and creatively doing directly contradicts the common, doctrinal assumption that a 'radical pedagogy', in order to 'speak' with learners, has to situationally locate itself where learners are 'actively struggling' or are - by whatever determining forces - 'being articulated'. It also contradicts the logic of the 'place-based' emancipator who must move into the village of the oppressed in order to name the 'objects' of oppression. As Polish educational theorist Tomasz Szkuclarek (1993) analyzes the logic of *deliverance*, from 'this point of view, Western ideologies of domination and those intended to liberate (like Marxism), sometimes look equally

oppressive, as long as they share the same basic linguistic and mental structures forming the ontology reflecting the cultural experience of the civilization whose attitude to the world was informed by the practice of conquest and colonization' (p. 60).

Illich (1971) adds, here, that Freire 'discovered that any adult can begin to read in a matter of forty hours if the first words he deciphers are charged with political meaning' (p. 26). Freire thus affirms the capacity of people to be able to learn, think, act and do - *in media res* - as capable, thinking beings. However, this coda - 'charged with political meaning' - implicitly risks returning learners to the synchronizing scenes of critico-emancipatory deliverance. What the *Nights of Labor* suggests - and what Jacotot argues - is that *anyone* can begin to read, and even teach themselves how to read and write, full stop. Moreover, there may be nothing to 'decipher', no proper series or ladder in the path to liberation or competency. Every step in the path of this *other* learning trajectory is a step outside of the history of mastery and servitude: and every step forward corroborates an idiosyncratic route, a new history of (autodidactic) capacity that is 'self-unveiled' to oneself. Here, there is no 'real' consciousness (in the submerged sense of the word) at the start of this process, just as there is no 'potential' consciousness awaiting the harmonious co-incident of co-learners at the path's dialectical resolution.

Breaking with the cycles of deliverance, for Rancière's workers, one's teacher was just as likely some shopkeeper who had wrapped up the sundry 'forms of another existence' in the form of 'lentil sacks' of the poor. As Rancière puts it, the first steps in the 'territory' of emancipation simply implied 'listening to and learning by heart, reading and recopying, decomposing and recomposing the few texts that one has managed to expropriate from the patrimony of the literate' (NL, 165). In this 'expropriated' territory

of literacy-learning, what Rancière describes are workers who are always already relating and comparing disparate things - learning, imitating and performatively doing *as if* they were serious thinkers, writers, philosophers, painters.



### **Incandescent & Voluptuous Genealogies: A History without Masters**

*Education, in a way, has always been ‘about’ freedom [...and] this concerns not just radical, emancipatory pedagogies with their direct liberatory claims...The question is, though, what freedom is at stake? – Tomasz Szkudlarek*

*The Nights of Labor* is not a book about education per se, but about workers who ‘aestheticized’ their lives precisely because they refused to accept ‘what is’ about their world, or believe in the fixed and stable singularity of social identities, in the finished unity of things or any ‘natural’ hierarchy of places, roles, and occupations. Moreover, by not having an educational master or schooling system, these workers also avoided incorporating Ellsworth’s ‘double-lack’ into their own, as it were, personal ontologies. In the first section of *The Nights of Labor*, the point-of-view is that of the workers themselves (as taken from archival data: letters, periodicals, personal journals, worker literary magazines, revolutionary propaganda, etc.). From this vantage point, no character in Rancière’s story disbelieves the ‘double-lack’ as much as Gabriel Gauney, a floor-joiner and extremely pissed-off laborer, who despises the brutality of work and its utter tyranny over his free time (in short, the time and space he uses to maximize his own distance from the measured world of monochrome subordination, labor, and necessity). Here, Gauney scrutinizes and ultimately shuns the various machineries of worker deliverance - the pre-Marxist ‘scientific socialism of the day’ - in order to ‘set up’ and ‘set out’ on his own, defining for himself a niche as a independent ‘jobber’ (which does not increase his economic means, but rather maximizes his aestheticizing space-time).

The following excerpt is about Gauney 'setting up' as a 'jobber'. I'd like to read the argument, however, as essentially an educational one, primarily because it touches on a different history, one that breaks with the fever of mastery and dependence in order to enact a different type of 'intellectual fever'. As a jobber, Gauney escapes the 'workshop of the master': 'servile labor' is transformed into 'free work', and instead of being 'devoured by time', he in turn 'devours time... the mastery of his time and the solitude of his space change the nature of this fever and reverse the relationship of dependence' (NL, 79-80). Now...

The absence of a master from the time and space of productive work turns this exploited work into something more: not just a bargain promising the master a better return in exchange for the freedom of the worker's movements but the formation of a type of worker belonging to a *different history than that of mastery*'. (NL, 82, emphasis added).

While Gauney is not liberated from the 'old society' of class-division and low-paid work, he is no longer confined to the 'monotone gray' of the 'workshop' where one's senses are relentlessly anesthetized, and where one's identity, place, and fate are unremittingly corroborated by the surrounding environment, by the calculated movements of other workers, and by the 'abhorrent gaze' of the master. Outside of this staging, Gauney's 'movements' are now his own, and he no longer 'deals with the master'. He instead occupies the distant palaces of the rich, enjoying the beauty of their vistas 'as if' they were his own. What he does with his hands (work) and what he sees when he lifts his gaze (distant vistas) are no longer implicated in the same, narrow story of class-identity: what the hands do and what they eyes see are no longer harmonized solely within the logic of necessity and the achromatic 'classifications' of the workshop:

the 'aesthetic gaze' separates the worker from a singular identity and self-evident role, the 'one thing' that workers 'do'.

Having 'set out', Gauney's new 'fever' is no longer circularly defined by an impotent rage against masters, but by the 'intoxication of [a] liberty' that substitutes the naturalness of social hierarchy for the contingent 'spiral' of different forms of being, of different contours of sensible experience (NL, 83). As with Jeanne Deroin, emancipation illuminates 'a new chain of relations between beings' that exists apart from, even runs against the grain of, social hierarchy, class division, and monotone (self)identification. By way of relief, this lateral chain of egalitarian relations - what all persons can do - reveals the 'naturalness' of social chains of being (hierarchy) to be arbitrary, a social fiction. And by 'setting up and setting out' - and thus now exterior to the workshops of both masters and emancipatory Saint-Simonian architects - Gauney interrupts through his own acts the 'linguistic and mental structures forming the ontology' of domination and deliverance: he enacts a new history without masters.

What is more, Gauney describes this 'emancipation', strangely enough, as 'voluptuous' - as in: 'the voluptuousness of emancipation is a fever from which one cannot be cured and which one cannot help but communicate' (NL, 83). 'Magnetic', 'incandescent', 'accelerating', and 'voluptuous', the bracing fever of emancipation is so 'intoxicating' that Gauney can no longer in any way 'be satisfied by any of the bribes that exploitation offers to servility' (NL, 85). On this path, Gauney has no need to be defended from exploitation's hegemonic illusions or bribes. Nor does he need to be girded by the social sciences of his time to understand the art of exploitation's mechanisms - not simply because he, above all, already understands those mechanisms

all too well, but because he has better things to do: he has his fever of 'equality' to expand, to move with and through, and communicate to others.

In critical discourses - and even in the most far-flung spaces of educational theory - one seldom hears a word like 'voluptuous' associated with 'emancipation', with teaching (or with anything else having to do with schools). As a critical educator charting the various dystopias of power, spectacle, or control-society, it's pretty much the last word on my mind.

Yet, if I abruptly assume the narrative POV of a *learner*, this word is not at all strange or unlikely. *Voluptuous* would perfectly describe many an 'emancipated fever' of my own where, for example, after having dedicated half-a-decade in German classes to learning that I could not learn or speak German from teachers who kept confirming this fact to me, I finally sat down with a dictionary and a second-hand copy of *Christiane F.* and, in about 'forty hours' or so, came to understand that I could do it (and even be passably fluent). This was - no joke - *voluptuous* - and in precisely the way Gauney projects the intoxication of 'setting up', the aura of 'setting out'.

Indeed, from *this* narrative vantage, I could chart innumerable voluptuous moments in a quantum history of invisible, alternative, or underground learning experiences (with few of them having much to do with schools, masters, or secrets, and most standing in stark contrast to the places and relations of educational institutions). Of course, this circuit of incandescent and magnetic relays is, generally speaking, neither visible nor even admissible from the standpoint of educational theory and policy making (which, as Ellsworth suggests, understands learning as an *effect* of teaching). Nor do such



outlying experiences or energizing relays display the obvious political teeth associated with engaged forms critical pedagogy or the content associated with a liberatory curriculum. Such learning moments are radically individual (and therefore singularly irreproducible) incandescences and, as such, may even be mistaken for erratic and desultory forms of ‘useless’ or ‘uncritical’ expenditure.

From the inadmissible vantage point of a *learner*, however, I could chart out a radically circuitous ‘night-time’ chain of incandescent, autodidactic, and largely ‘emancipated’ moments, all of which would testify to a very ‘different history than that of mastery and servility’, and all of which would define a (disqualified) genealogy of experiences leading directly to *this* labor - this sentence - right here and now. And I’d bet that anyone who has not been too successfully schooled, or successfully destroyed by schools, could effortlessly map out a similar trajectory of radiantly eccentric or vital moments, both significant and microscopic.

For Rancière, this different history is an immaterial genealogy that testifies to the equality of intelligence: it is a history of workers (in their own words) who came to perceive themselves as ‘thinking beings’ sharing a common world of thought and action. Even more effectively than *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, *The Nights of Labor* charts out (makes visible/intelligible) an alternative history that brings into focus precisely what is, for Rancière, a ‘fundamental question: how those whose business is not thinking might assume the equal authority to think and thereby constitute themselves as thinking subjects’ (PP, xxvi) - as subjects who demonstrate that they, like anyone, are capable of framing their own worlds. As Rancière further suggests, this alternative history of equality can be linked to a kind of politics: the qualification of those without

qualification, the acts of those without recognizable forms of certification/authority. As Rancière explores this notion, ‘a worker who had never learned how to write and yet tried to compose verses to suit the taste of his times was perhaps more of a danger to the prevailing ideological order than a worker who performed revolutionary songs’ (NL, xxix). Rancière is interested, then, in how those who are not expected to ‘think’ or qualified ‘to do’ end up disproving those given social roles and pedagogical expectations by actually thinking and doing. Furthermore, by apprehending one’s own capacities and competences *in action* - in unguided performance - one comes to understand, so Rancière argues, that one can ‘take part’ as an equal, that one is already involved in a classless community of equality.

Basically reiterating Gauney’s outlook - and anticipating Rancière’s definition of ‘social pedagogization’ - Illich further augments this argument by inferring that the ‘successfully schooled’ might actually be worse off than the ‘unschooled’ because they are already damaged goods, already ‘smothered’ and ‘patternized’ by the workshops of ‘good instruction’. As Illich (1971) puts it, the successfully schooled may identify their ‘personal, cognitive growth with elaborate planning and manipulation’ (p. 56), conferring the power of their own ‘imagination’ to those who plan, think, lead, and deliver. Illich also suggests that the well-schooled, rather than being *more* autonomous, are instead dependent ‘addicts’ (p. 81), people prepared to attribute their growth to the gardeners and greenhouses that grew them. As such, the well-schooled are ‘conditioned’, in Illich’s view, for more pedagogization, for more dependence upon homologous systems of expertise, primed to hand over their intellectual car-keys to the police and thus ‘easy prey for other institutions’ (p.56).



Figure 6. *Cursed, Cursed Creator*, James Ciatko (2002) Oil on Paper

## Domestic & Altered States: The Stylized Trembling Hand

If there is a 'night' of incandescent moments of learning - an emancipating circuit of autodidactic (self)demonstrations - how are these idiosyncratic relays made inadmissible (or simply eclipsed) from the memory of teachers? For one, as Bourdieu suggests, the classical-realist 'engine' awaits teachers just as much as it awaits learners: educators step into an already-rolling movie (*Sens Pratique*), and the POV of 'capable learner' is swapped out for a starring role as master, professor, or enlightened 'ray' sender. Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) dedicate a descriptive section of *Reproduction* to this process, where institutional roles are, in large part, theatrically inhabited and ritually reinscribed. In this staging of practice, patterned (and thus patternizing) professional narratives and postures - embodied attitudes, 'Magisterial discourses', and performative acts - even down to the most minute ornamental flourish (say, the 'stylized trembling of the hand' immediately preceding the *coup de grace* of the master's crowning explication) - are theatrically performed and appreciated, generationally introjected and reiterated, in a routine where incandescent learners become (somehow overnight) guiding 'experts' who have 'arrived'.

Indeed, in both institutional and theoretical milieus, this *other* incandescent history - evidenced *in fact* by Rancière's 'workers' - would seem to be unrecognizable, 'inarticulable', or simply opaque to any educational theory that would presume to take itself seriously. Still, I don't think I would be alone in suggesting (from this disqualified perspective) that this alternative lineage of 'setting up' or 'setting out' describes an arc of uncanny, homeless moments which might be more 'emancipating' or 'aestheticizing' than anything organized under the banner of socio-critical utopian praxis. That is my

argument - and that is also my particular experience as learner (even if I would later step into a filmic system in which those intensities, experiences, or ways of doing no longer carried any weight or serious visibility).

In Poland, however, I could no longer viably star as myself in the role of me. And if the ‘absence of a master from the time and space of productive work turns this exploited work into something more’, my own abrupt pedagogical ‘homelessness’ was perhaps an inadvertent point of departure for a type of learning that freed up people from the master’s anaesthetic/workshop. As for various other ‘points of view’, the computer screen itself established a crucial partition: with screen in place, people were already involved in - and inventing - diverging spaces, actions, and movements and mostly not listening to me anyway. I was, as it were, just a vague stuttering head in their rear-view mirror.

Second, in many instances, the master was literally ‘absent’ from the shop - that is, in the adjacent hardware closet pleading with some malfunctioning gizmo, or poking at various wires and cables to get the data-stream to move faster, and so forth. Finally, then, most of the things students were doing in no way required either the presence of the instructor, nor the leveraging of talents in progressively-linked scenes or developmental episodes. Now, I’m not suggesting that any of my students felt ‘voluptuous’ about what they were making or doing. This I can’t say. There was, however, a dramaturgy in place where no implicit double-lack needed to be reduced or filled in, where students were dramatizing their own paths in a ‘real’ hypertextual sphere that was not simply reducible to just another educational vignette *on the way* to doing.

Unlike Joseph Jacotot, however, I had not discovered a new method: all of this happened despite my good or bad intentions. That is to say, I did not break with the classico-realist engine (what Jacotot calls ‘explication’) because I recognized a *different way*. That’s Hollywood. It was more the case that I was, perhaps, simply a very lame ‘explicator’ to begin with. And this fact my American Cultural Studies class kept adeptly proving *to me*. Here, it was clear to me - as it should be universally consensual to all - that if anybody could reduce the distance between a nuanced understanding of American culture and my students’ obvious non-knowledge of it, it would be me, the ‘native-speaker’ from the States. Yet, somehow, against all odds, I was foiled again by banking education - and by the staggering mnemonic powers associated with it.

Memorably, I was arranging various scenes of U.S. democracy and its associated major documents when one student respectfully inquired about how the ‘constitutional convention’ fit into my design. After a long, vacant silence on my part, she answered my protracted blankness by narrowing her own gaze onto a specific point in class space, about one meter in front of her and just off to the left. Thus zoned in - and in one of the most astoundingly disorienting ‘cross-cultural’ feats I was to witness - she then appeared to uplink with some kind of global superbrain, reciting long strands of historical minutia about whatever it was that I didn’t happen to know anything about. And that’s a true story. To which I responded - ‘Oh, yes, um...*that* constitutional convention’ (followed, then, by the laughter of the children).

In Vietnam, I believe this was called fragging the lieutenant. What finally stilled my ‘stylized trembling hand’ for good, though, was this student, Przemek, who endlessly strove to disabuse me/us/the class of any kind of favourable outlook on American culture

whatsoever, insisting, for example, that all post-war U.S. technological development was devised solely by exiles and immigrants, by people who were *not even* Americans and who were, in many instances, former-Nazi scientists. In a patriotic froth, I stammered back something to the effect of: Everyone knows who is responsible for those technologies - Americans who were reverse-engineering crashed UFOs. So, yet another filmstrip was stripped out of its carriage, and my days as a credible commentator on my homeland were over, which was actually fine with me, because I was as unhappy with the curriculum as they were.



Figure 7. More Placemats from *In the Faculty Room* (1998-2000)

Pedagogically homeless, again, I did not have many options. On one hand, I could easily roll out the ‘pre-packaged’ lecture materials that the Polish instructors bored their own students with. Developed by an agency called the British Council, this ‘American Studies’ curriculum was, in my eyes, an abomination - even worse than my own program of study - rich with textbook information expounding textbook clichés, punctuated by jingoistic images that (even if true) were really out of date, and also abetted by a

Winslow Homer picture here or little scholarly essays there (by British people from England) with inauspicious titles like ‘The Artlessness of American Culture’.

So, finally, I simply asked friends to start sending me things - anything - for an American Studies curriculum. Shortly thereafter, I started receiving some decent and mostly not-dreary artefacts (documentary films, *Do the Right Thing*, music tapes/CDs, pictures, etc), some of which I was acquainted with and most of which I wasn’t (from Morton Feldman and Charles Ives to a sampler of ‘no-wave’/‘no-age’ experimental rock music). Adding to this, a cultural attaché from the American Embassy (apparently under the Greenbergian delusion/mission that New York city circa 1950 was the zenith of the world-historical cultural dialectic) was able to contribute documentaries about Jackson Pollock and materials on American Abstract Expressionism (to which Przemek in turn added, ‘most of those guys aren’t even Americans’).

What ended up falling into place, then, was less a good, representative curriculum about ‘American culture’ than a very random and discontinuous selection of things that could be, as Jacotot puts it, shared ‘in common’. As Jacotot describes this, a ‘thing in common’ divides the oratorical intelligence of ‘the master’ from the intelligence of a learner - sort of like a computer screen does - putting *everyone’s* intelligences in equal relation is what is experienced. Unlike the Socratic interlocutor who feigns ignorance in order to surreptitiously guide the path - or even the emancipating Freirean ‘co-learner’ who learns what he/she more or less already knows (though says they don’t), it was pretty clear that I, as instructor, did not know that much, and that certain students already knew more than me, and that the only real distance I was capable of reducing, for my ‘ignorant students’, was the distance to Area 51.



Again, I'm not sure exactly what each and every student understood about American culture, but we did cover some unanticipated territory. For one, the documentary about Pollock stimulated some unexpected responses - certain kinds of replies that became articulable, I think, once I began spectating from the same position as others. A particularly interesting moment came when Pollock's free, gestural techniques were compared with the work of a 1930s Polish artist, Witkacy. This comparison is an unlikely one, not simply because I couldn't have made it, but because Pollock and Witkacy pretty much occupy opposing ends of any ordinary system of modern art-historical classification. Indeed, who's Witkacy? And where can he be found in any Western art historical curriculum? As somebody recounted, however, in every Witkacy picture there is, next to the artist's signature, a 'coded' list of (usually several) 'mind-altering drugs' that the artist used to help free himself up to get whatever visual intensity or other-worldly, vibrational impression it was he was seeking. And in this respect, the gestural, aleatory 'freeing up' of Pollock's 'action painting' was not, in principle, that radically different from the 'freeing up' Witkacy achieved through various compounds. In both cases, both the formal ends and the aesthetic conventions of representation were submitted to a similar 'energetic' and chance means of unruly artistic disruption or sensible intensification.

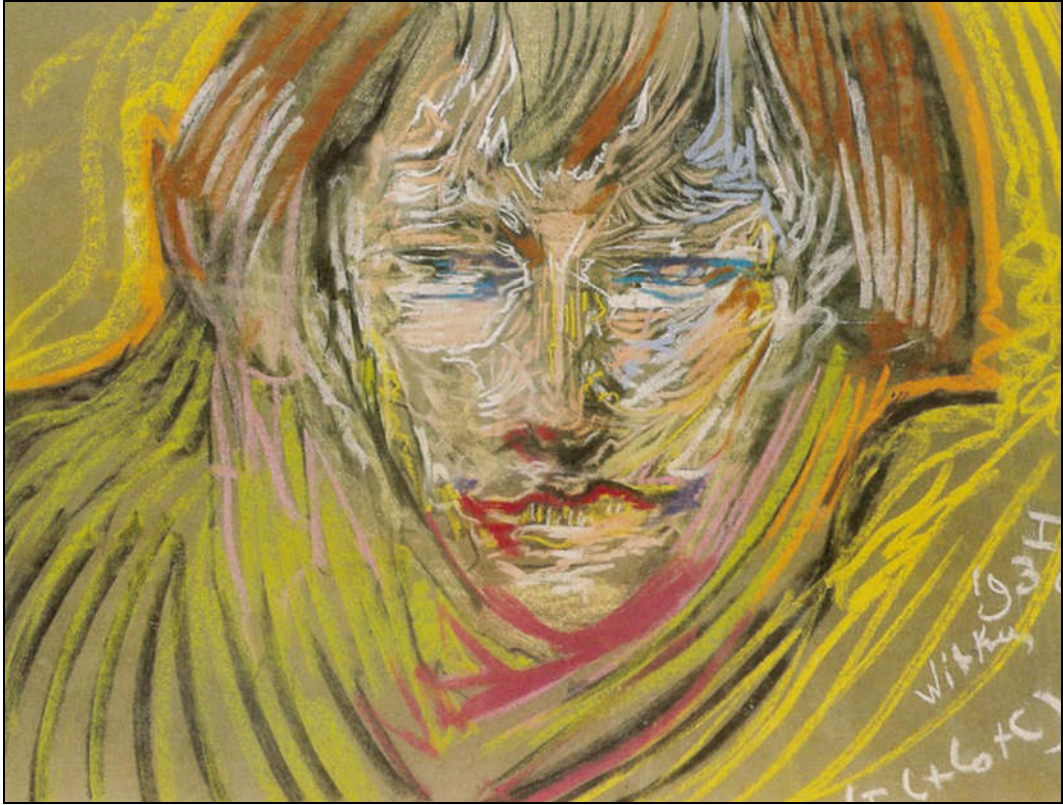


Figure 8. J. Pollock, *Lavender Mist: Number 1*, (1950) & S. Witkiewicz, *Portret Zofii Jagodowskie* (1930)<sup>7</sup>

Though this was/is not exactly a standard deduction for any American culture studies class, this ‘altered states’ observation, as anomalous or unofficial as it was, seemed as plausible a story of art as any I’ve heard. More than simply an observation, it was an invention, a linking of distant points into a new constellation of meaning. As such, it even (arguably) evokes those ‘acts’ of ‘awareness’ that Maxine Greene (1995) attributes to art in her defense of aesthetic education - *not* when she is extolling the value of ‘shocks of awareness’ - but just when she is simply talking about things like ‘making and shaping an image’, ‘devising metaphors’, or ‘telling a tale’, things that might bring into visibility that which is ‘not yet seen, said or heard...[in] everyday life’ (p. 114-126). In any case, this unlikely observation and, at least for me, voluptuous connection - one resulting from a ‘thing placed in common’ - could never have happened if the master were at home.

Now, I suppose the real *catastasis* of this story is that the master did go home and, believing himself at home, forgot everything about what it meant to be pedagogically homeless.

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<sup>7</sup> *Lavender Mist: Number 1*, Jackson Pollock (oil, enamel & aluminum on canvas; 221 x 300 cm) courtesy of The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. *Portret Zofii Jagodowskie*, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (paper; pastel; 50.00 x 65.00 cm; inv. number: MPŚ-M/27) courtesy of Muzeum Pomorza Środkowego w Słupsku. Images used with permission.

## **(2) Re/Figuring Aesthetic Education: The Distribution of the Sensible**

If *The Nights of Labor* chronicles stories of emancipation without emancipators, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* stories a parallel logic of emancipation in educational settings. The purpose of this chapter will be to set Rancière's argument in *The Nights* in relation to Jacotot's educational adventures in intellectual equality. To this end, I will borrow the cinematic motif provided by Ellsworth (Chapter 1) - as well as a novelistic idiom elaborated by Bakhtin - to explore Jacotot's notion of explication/stultification, while also developing the argument that all education is, in the first instance, 'aesthetic education'. In this context, I'll introduce Rancière's notion of the *distribution of the sensible* to argue that the formula for 'emancipated agency' is, simply put, emancipated agency. Thus what links *The Nights of Labor* to *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* is a view of (learner) agency that hinges not first on understanding things, but on doing things. In turn, this means exploring a theatrical view of learning agency that pivots on unexpected - and role-blurring - acts of improvisation and impersonation.

### **Pedagogical Fictions: Explication & the 'Art of Teaching'**

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière recounts the story of a professor-in-exile who happened upon a startling 'discovery' - the 'equality of intelligence' of anyone. Jacotot's finding not only challenged his long-held pedagogical beliefs, but set into play a series of events which allowed him to 'experiment' with a method of equality he came to

call ‘universal teaching’. In summary, Flemish-speaking students at the University of Louvain sought Jacotot out to be their instructor. Unable to instruct his students in French, and in order to bridge the ‘gap’ between two languages, ‘a minimal link of a thing in common had to be established between himself and them’ (IS, 2). And as chance would have it, the ‘thing in common’ was a polyglot edition of Fenelon’s utopian epic, *Telemaque*. Jacotot left them to their own resources to translate the book and then express what they thought about it. The results of this experiment exceeded all of his expectations. Even though he had removed himself from the scene of his students’ learning, their expressions - in excellent French - were those of mature and capable writers. Consequently, Jacotot was forced to question his own ‘art of teaching’.

Up to this point, Jacotot had believed that the business of education was to ‘transmit knowledge’. Not unlike contemporary models of learning, the ‘art of teaching’ tasked teachers with bringing students ‘by *degrees*, to the level of the [teacher’s] expertise’, and to forestall those ‘chance detours’ of minds ‘still incapable of distinguishing the essential from the accessory, the principle from the consequence’ (IS, 3). What Jacotot called ‘explication’ implies starting with basic elements, scaffolding increasingly complex learning contingencies, and progressively shifting students from ignorance to understanding, from incapacity to competency. Explication works by understanding where a student ‘is’, by isolating attendant rudiments, and by linking ‘their simplicity in principle with the factual simplicity that characterizes young and ignorant minds...To teach was to transmit learning and form minds...according to an ordered progression from the most simple to the most complex’ (IS, 3). Through explication, the student could be moved forward and gradually ‘elevated to as high a level as his social

destination demanded [and in this way] prepared to make the use of the knowledge appropriate to that destination' (*IS*, 3).

After the *Telemaque*, however, a 'grain of sand' slipped into Jacotot's teaching machine. Jacotot had given his students 'the order to pass through a forest whose openings and clearings he himself had not discovered' (*IS*, 9); he had himself 'communicated nothing', had left his own intelligence 'out of the picture'. This in turn set into play 'an entirely liberated relationship between the intelligence of the student and the intelligence of the book' (*IS*, 13). Instead of his knowledge and competency taking center stage, 'everything was in the book': there was only the book, his students' 'eagerness', and Jacotot's order to engage *in media res*.

Jacotot discovered that explication - the 'art of teaching' - was not necessary to *cause* learning, was not the origin of a competency. Here, Jacotot not only questioned the necessity of explication for learning, but now saw in its logic a very different *effect*: stultification. What Jacotot now saw was that explication was not necessary to remedy an incapacity to understand. On the contrary, that very incapacity provides the structuring *fiction* for a conception of the world that divides the world in two. 'It is the explicator who needs the incapable and not the other way around; it is he who constitutes the incapable as such' (*IS*, 6).

If explicators viewed themselves as the cause of learning, and if explication authorized the teacher's own position of 'mastery' (in relation to the learning other), explication did more than communicate knowledge or forms of competency: it entrained learners into a dependent role. The art of teaching shows persons that they can not learn



without guidance. As Rancière continues, ‘to explain something to someone is to first of all show him that he cannot understand it by himself...before being the act of a pedagogue, explication is the myth of pedagogy, the parable of the world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable...The pedagogical myth divides the world into two. More precisely, it divides intelligences into two’ (*IS*, 6-7).

### **The Distribution of the Sensible: Dividing Intelligence into Two**

While Rancière’s key notion of the ‘distribution of the sensible’ is formalized in later books<sup>8</sup>, it’s possible to read explication in terms of this concept. For Rancière, a ‘distribution of the sensible’ is an allegory of inequality (ES), a self-evident system of (inegalitarian) relations that is hewn, *a priori*, into forms of community. In Rancière’s words, a distribution of sensible is a ‘system of self-evident facts of sense perception that discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts [roles] and positions [competences] within it...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’ (*PA*, 12). A distribution of the sensible establishes a theater of common sense: it’s a tacit system/means of identifying the different ‘parts’ of a community and for disclosing how those various ‘parts’ fit into a ‘given’ order of roles, ranks, and qualifications to act.

More concretely, one can think the notion of ‘distribution’ in terms of a ‘given’ system of suppositions that determine who is authorized to act upon whom, whose speech

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<sup>8</sup> *Disagreement & The Politics of the Aesthetic*

is perceptible as proper discourse, and whose performances are inadmissible, or whose speech is heard as ‘noise’. As an allegory of inequality, a distribution of the sensible footlights who is in a *position* to know, think, or perceive, and who is ‘naturally’ excluded: that is, who is *out* of position, or ill-equipped, to ‘sense’ or reasonably ‘make sense’ of things. For example, de Certeau (1989) pinpoints just such a division when he contrasts the everyday poetic speech of street-level actors with the discourse of experts, sociologists, and political ‘professionals’.

As Jacotot illustrates, explication enacts a *distribution of the sensible* by drawing the line between ‘knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable’ (*IS*, 6-7). The pedagogical fiction ‘divides the world in two’: it determines who is equipped with the ‘talent’ to apprehend (sense) something, the methodological means to make good sense of a text, object, or state-of-affairs, and the repertoire of disciplinary/discursive forms and speech performances ‘adequate’ for translating a text or describing a situation.

If it’s assumed that learners can be gradually guided to a state of knowing or aptitude - that is, equality with the teacher - then inequality is taken for granted as point of departure. The view that a latent equality can be achieved (in a distant future) not only instates inequality - makes inequality intelligible, self-evident - but makes it ‘happen’ as part of an embodied curriculum.

As incisive as Rancière or his countless commentators may be, *Sponge Bob* tells the same ‘distributive’ story of explication as well, and arguably better, than educational theory does the trick. In an episode called ‘Artist Unknown’, *Sponge Bob* starts off as an



avid learner who enrolls in an art class. Here, he quickly comes to inhabit explication's lesson from his teacher, Mr. Octopus, a would-be artistic master and legend in his own mind. What Sponge Bob learns in Art 101 is that he is in fact an incompetent amateur. Despite the sheer evidence of his own extant capacity to really make art - and to do artistically - he must literally *erase* the evidence in order to return to 'the beginning', and to submit to a tried and true pedagogical process whereby learners learn, make and do - or, more precisely, are gradually prepared to make and do. What Sponge Bob finally learns from his instructor is that his eagerly-composed creations are not (*yet*) art, that they are immature (despite the fact he's gainfully imitated, on his own, the works of various Renaissance masters) and that they are, at best, incomplete. At one point, the instructor 'perfects' one of Sponge Bob's wanting sculptures by reshaping its nose so that it resembles his - the instructor's - own octopus' nose.

Like any attentive student, Sponge Bob embodies *this* lesson: stultification. He inhabits the *who's who* of the pedagogical fiction and understands the measure of his own inability (the distance to real agency/capacity or, as it were, the master's superior competency). Moreover, he understands that he won't get 'there' without traversing a continuum of rehearsals, as parted out to him, strategically, by his instructor. Lesson learned, Sponge Bob openly confesses his newly-realized unworthiness to his instructor, right before reeling his way into a trash bin - *I deserve this*, he affirms - where he is picked up by a garbage truck - *I deserve thisssss* - and is deposited in the town garbage dump where, despondent, he crawls into a mountain of refuse, reiterating: *this is what I deserve*.



Figure 9. Pictures of My TV Set (2)

From the standpoint of the octopus, one might say that it sucks when a kid's cartoon *does* theory better than you can, 'you' referring, in this case, to me. On the other hand, one might say that the creators of *Sponge Bob* themselves enact a 'rupture' in a 'distribution of the sensible', a rupture in given field of relational op/positions that would make the 'self-evident' distinction between the (intellectually) capable and the incapable, the qualified and those who are on-the-way-to a model competency.

Above all, *Sponge Bob* enacts a disorder of common disciplinary boundaries (ways of knowing or representing the world) that would make one form of activity or discourse perceptible (visible or hearable) as 'legitimate' sense, while making other forms of expression inadmissible. In the case of *Sponge Bob*, this blurring of hierarchal roles, identities, and forms of appropriate discourse is simply enacted through a blurring of territories - the blurring of 'adult content' with 'child's play', the mixing of serious theory with pointless games or gratuitous expenditures.

Moreover, by blurring categories and (speech) genres, *Sponge Bob* breaks with, or tosses a wrench into, the cinematic 'engine' driving education(al media): there is no point of departure in 'double-lack', and there are no instructive 'voice-overs' determining a proper effect or affect for locatable viewers. Formally speaking, one might say there is a great deal of trust conferred by the show's creators to the show's viewers (whoever they may be). And by citing a kid's cartoon, I'm not trying to be facetious. On the contrary, *Sponge Bob Square Pants* breaks down rigid disciplinary divisions (distributions) between a sophisticated discourse and an ordinary kid's story, in large part by addressing

kids and adults alike *as if* they exhibited the same intelligence, the same ‘equal’ capacity to translate - and also enjoy - this comedy - or is it tragedy? - about schooling. In a serious way, a kid’s cartoon upstages theory. For instance, a researcher presents his academic work to a friend over lunch, though concerned that his auditor may be challenged by certain (seemingly unavoidable) academic mannerisms. His auditor, however, alters the terrain, the rules of the game, by replying: ‘I saw that on *Sponge Bob* last week.’

Put otherwise, the *Sponge Bob* show does two things which illustrates Rancière’s notion of the distribution of the sensible. It tells a story of explication (in terms of an incisive narrative about the pedagogical fiction and its stultifying distribution of positions and in/capacities) while at the same time *disrupting* that very distribution (in terms of the show’s formal assumption that anyone-anywhere can grasp the story, translate it to some end, derive pleasure from it). Unlike the Octopus, who assumes - and clearly relishes - the title/status/mojo of art instructor, the show does not assume ignorance or solicit particular viewers - children? - where they might ‘fit’ into a developmental series of (st/age-appropriate) learning events.

In this respect, *Sponge Bob* ‘does’ what Jacotot announces: it presupposes the ‘equality of intelligence’ of anyone - a *redistribution* of the sensible that undoes tacit partitions and divisions between ‘expected’ dispositions and abilities, crossing the boundaries between an expert mode of discourse and its inadmissible (or undisciplined) other. The presentation assumes equality - and by assuming equality, the method brings equality into the present frame.

Rancière dramatizes this same method of equality in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, blurring the lines between scientific (speech) genres and narrative forms - to the point where the book can be said to have no 'proper' readership, no intended audience or privileged (academic) destination per se. Abstaining from heavy-handed allegory or systematic ends, the book 'about' equality puts its methodological money where its mouth is.

As Rancière-Jacotot summarize the approach, Racine's 'genius' (like that of *Sponge Bob*) 'lies in having worked by the principle of the equality of intelligence, in having not believed himself superior to those he was speaking to, in having even worked for those who predicted that he would fade like a season...The artist's emancipatory lesson, opposed on every count to the professor's stultifying lesson, is this: each one of us is an artist to the extent that he carries out a double process; he is not content to be a mere journeyman but wants to make all work a means of expression, and he is not content to feel something but tries to impart it to others. The artist needs equality as the explicator needs inequality' (*IS*, 70).

### **Aesthetic Education: Explication's Engine & the Art of Distance**

Somebody *feels* a sensory impression <> somebody *makes sense* of it. Who is capable of *feeling* perceptible materials - and who is capable of 'making sense' of them, or is capable of generating a 'sensible' reply? Rancière writes that *aisthesis* is, before anything, an old Greek word that implies a link - or a connective logic - between these two capacities: a *capacity of feeling* (sense) and a capacity of *understanding* (making sense) (*JR*, 114). As an aesthetic notion, what Rancière calls a 'distribution of the

sensible' *prefigures* certain game rules and (theatrical) conventions for how this link between 'sense and sense' is coordinated in a (learning) community. As a self-evident ordering of bodies, roles and relations, a distribution (*partage*) of the sensible determines how these capacities are 'parted out' to identifiable (different) bodies/actors, how pedagogical acts are seen to elicit in others predictable effects (of cognition and affect), and how 'developed' forms of competency become recognizable as such. As a distribution of the sensible, explication can be seen as commonplace system of inequality in which the 'pedagogical fiction' is both prefigured and 'aesthetically' played out. First, the pedagogical fiction is played out in terms of an aesthetic education - the means by which teachers connect what is felt (sensible) to what can be understood, said, or done. Less obviously, explication is an embodied theater: it determines a set of possible moves and performances (by identifiable players) that stage what can be apprehended (by whom - when, where, and under what pedagogical conditions) and, in turn, what is 'seeable', 'sayable' and 'doable' *within* that 'given situation' (*données sensible*).

Here, it worthwhile to return to Ellsworth's cinematic metaphor. Ellsworth (1989) suggests that in the classical-realist system of education(al media), the 'subjects' of education(al films) always 'suffer from [double lack]...a lack of information about a particular subject, issue, or process *plus* lack of knowledge about how to use or interpret that information properly' (p. 56). Content aside, the explicative (filmic) apparatus 'works' by 1) knowing what the learner does not know and 2) knowing that the learner does not know *how* to know (yet).

As Ellsworth continues, the traditional education(al) movie 'denies the mechanisms of its own constructedness and thus demands, and accommodates, a similar

presentation of curricular material as neutral, unconstructed, waiting to be discovered' (p. 56). Since what *can* be known or said is contained within the filmic system or curricular design, then what's latent - but waiting to be discovered - is part of a finished or an 'unconstructed' world. If the curriculum contains in advance what is knowable or doable, then teacher's own *knowing* already anticipates a specific way of *doing things* (that is, explicating) in classrooms. Internal to the assumption that teachers are 'authorities' who 'know', a specific theater of defined roles and possible role play - a distribution of the sensible - is coordinated, played out, and in turn embodied as unconstructed or unquestionable. In the way I'm reading Ellsworth's movie metaphor, positions/roles of epistemic privilege (and of relative inequality) are expressed dramaturgically: in turn, the theater - the mode of performance - re-expresses positions of epistemic privilege as (an embodied) part of the curricular path.

By assuming an 'already-achieved' knowledge - or a 'closed text' - what is to 'waiting be discovered' is thus *disclosed* in an orderly fashion by those persons who not only display 'better' ways of knowing, but are also the primary causes of *that* 'better' mode of understanding (p. 57). Here, teachers arguably become the authors - or directors - of a 'reality' of inequality and self-evident lack that is enacted *through* the 'art' of explicating. In addition to - and alongside - what the teacher teaches, the teacher 'stultifies', and the drama of stultification is inhabited, recited, and reiterated (as *the* way of teaching and learning).

The cinematic pedagogy that Ellsworth examines pivots upon 'double-lack', which is analogous to what Jacotot calls explication's 'double-inaugural gesture'. The first act of the double-inaugural gesture relegates the act of learning itself to its proper

(i.e., subordinate) place: explication decrees an *arbitrary* point of departure that officially commences acts of educational doing. By firing the starting gun, and by openly assigning the cause of meaningful forms of learning to the institution or disciplinary expert, the opening game move ignores the evidence that people are always already involved in performative acts of learning, acts of ‘making sense’ of - constructing and refiguring - their own lived worlds (and all of this is evidenced not only by the *Telemaque* experiment, but by the fact that any speaking/signing being has learned to speak without an explicator, and that ‘illiterate’ parents can, after all, teach their children to read and write, and that ‘workers’ who *can’t* write in fact *do write* poetry). What explication occludes from the outset, then, are those meaningful, incandescent trajectories that are capably enacted when ‘anybody’ sees, feels, learns and does on their own, under their own power.

Once *acts of learning* have been put in ‘place’, the ‘second act’ of the double-inaugural gesture is to throw that ‘veil’ over what is to be learned. An arbitrary starting point now conceals a hidden ‘secret’ (and a forward-looking task). In the second act of the double-inaugural gesture, explication puts the teacher ahead of the game, in a privileged location to gradually ‘reduce’ the ignorance of learners by moving students towards the teacher’s enlightened vantage point. This puts, between the fingers of the knowing explicator, the very thread to be unraveled, that is, the theatrical techniques for suturing contiguous moments together, or for constructing a curricular game of ‘show and tell’ that works the seam between (mis)recognition and awareness, ignorance and intelligence. As Rancière argues, by presupposing inequality as a term to abolish or reduce, inequality - as an embodied educational commonplace - is built into the



progressive logic. The assumption that a latent, potential, or future equality can be progressively attained (the identity of the students' mind with the teacher's mind) 'inaugurates' inequality or lack in the present. If the medium is the message, then explication's mode of address understands ignorance in its place: the teacher understands who or where the learner 'is' (*in lack*), what comes next in the curricular sequence, and when/where to solicit an auditor/audience (or insert one's voice-over or expert intervention).

The pedagogical fiction names inequality - makes it intelligible - by naming distinctions between common, everyday ways of figuring out, groping, translating, expressing, or storying and uncommon disciplinary methods or scientific 'speech genres'. Explication takes these quite commonplace distinctions - a distribution of the sensible - and plays out the obvious inequality of aptitudes and dispositions as an 'art of distance'. Explication presupposes the inequality of intelligence or disposition and enacts the inequality as a *distance* to be reduced. Explication's 'distance' is thus derived from the master's knowledge of the terrain to be covered and how the set pieces of learning can be tactically plotted out to an ignorance that cannot, by itself, make *the* journey. At the same time, the teacher stands at the end of the same continuum occupied by the learner: the teacher is fixed in a position of 'rest' or 'arrival' which, for Aristotle, was understood as a state of distinction, the entelechic goal of all movement (Blumenberg, 1983).

If Ellsworth's cinematic metaphor parallels Jacotot's notion of explication, Ellsworth's critique of liberation pedagogies is also paralleled in Rancière's critique of the critical tradition. While they don't say that same things, Rancière and Ellsworth both address not only 'oppressive formations' in traditional schooling, but also challenge a

critical logic that would see itself as the radical, liberational other to those oppressive formations. As Ellsworth (1994) defines the incongruity, here, critical methods ‘operationalize’ against dominant systems while ‘failing to launch a meaningful analysis of...the institutionalized power imbalances between themselves and their students, or the essentially paternalist project of education’ (p. 307). From different vantage points, Rancière and Ellsworth both suggest that the paternal-enlightening project - be it ‘critical’ or ‘uncritical’ - reconstitutes the same distributions and hierarchal relations, the same ‘sensible’ roles that name and separate those who know from those who don’t, those who can see from those who can’t, and those whose discourse ‘make sense’ from those whose undisciplined speech is off-course, missing something, or in need of a frequency tweak.

As Ellsworth (1994) continues, despite professed orientations around issues like social justice, critical agency, and the democratic ‘empowerment of voice’, what is ‘left unproblematized’ by critical pedagogies is the ‘implied superiority of the teacher’s understanding’, a transcendent knowledge that can somehow grasp the situation and stakes of (minority) others (p. 308). Along side this ‘epistemic privilege’, what also remains unquestioned is an ‘*undefined progressiveness*’ that underwrites what goes on in the critical classroom (p.308). In my own interpolation, then, traditional forms of schooling and radical/emancipatory forms of schooling presuppose the same ‘deficits’, enact the same theater of relations (oppressive formations), and thus do the same sorts of things.

If Ellsworth argues that there is an ‘undefined progressiveness’ left unproblematized by critical pedagogies, Jacotot-Rancière see the ‘logic of progress’ at the very crux of explication’s aesthetic engine - an ‘art of distance’ which identifies

bodies, distributes them to proper 'place', and then strives to reduce the distance between the two unequal points. Jacotot refers to this as an 'aggregative' process which 'binds' one mind to another in 'coincidence', tethering the intellectual acts and performances of the learner to the 'orbit' as the master.

On one level, there is the student cited above (Sponge Bob) who is synchronized into a continuum - a series of progressive events - that functions less to maximize his demonstrated capacities than to erase them. The knowledge of ignorance establishes the inaugural 'setback' as well as a newly-elaborated distance to gradually reduce. Freire's dialectical method adheres to the same game rules: aesthetic presentations are admissible (or inadmissible) as decided by the teacher's knowledge of the learner's stage of un/readiness - in relation to what the learner is 'not yet' equipped to perceive or handle.

For Jacotot, explication - in terms of the contract that it enacts between minds that are 'different' - stultifies. Explication's art of distance thus establishes and authorizes the master's competency *before* the (possible) performance of learners: in doing so, it founds a pedagogical treadmill that forever reduplicates explicative relations and, therefore, keeps the subordinate intelligence in its (dependent) place. As Rancière puts it, learners always *advance*, but there is always something else up the 'master's sleeve' - another term, another partial symbol of accreditation, a withheld fragment of knowledge - that endlessly postpones official competency, recertifies dependence, or teaches that one is 'not yet' really involved in a shared process of translating things, or 'not yet' qualified to truly participate. A clear-and-distinct difference between those who know and those who don't is continued - is theatrically embodied and institutionally conserved - as the 'common sense'.

Illich argues that schools maintain their institutional authority over others by, for one, conserving and dispensing so-called ‘secrets’. As Jacotot describes explication, the explicator’s book is in fact defined by what’s been secreted away. In contrast to Jacotot’s book - a thing-in-common - the explicator’s lesson is always ‘unfinished’, is subject to ‘the delay’ of the pending explanation, the clarifying flourish. The explicator’s book is always revealed to have a ‘false bottom’, a ‘hidden’ depth, or ‘deeper’ level - a latent, and therefore ‘uncommon’, something *else* that the knowledgeable master withholds for the right time, stage, context. Whatever it is that is ‘hidden’ behind the shared surface of signs or images (be it the intention of the author or a non-intentional meaning decipherable by a critical discipline) the dramaturgical power over what is veiled - and therefore the power to unveil - ensures that the master stays ahead of the game (to filmstrip how the elements might unfold). Through this unfolding, one mind is bound to another. By managing the link between what is felt and what sense can be made, the master ‘aggregates’ knowledge and keeps the learner in ‘coincidence’ with the master’s path. On this path, there ‘is no intelligence...There is intelligence where each person acts, tells what [they] are doing and gives the means of verifying the reality of [their] action. [In turn], explication is the annihilation of one mind by another’ (IS, 32).

The explicator’s book prefigures and reiterates its distribution of the sensible. Here, the very ‘logic’ of stagism and gradualism sets up authorities and ranks, initiating fresh distances to reduce. In the end, there is no end. For as long as explication is enacted, the same positional roles are restaged and equality is postponed: an ‘actual’ talent eludes ‘real’ embodiment, or rotates out of (disciplinary) view. ‘At each stage the abyss of ignorance is dug again; the professor fills it in before digging another. Fragments add up,

detached pieces of the explicator's knowledge that put the student on a trail, following a master with whom he will never catch up. The book is never whole; the lesson is never finished' (*IS*, 21).

The lesson of explication - what's incorporated by those who follow the trail - is that one does not have the power to *begin* to arrive. Stultification means taking a place within a 'circle of powerlessness': the capitulation of one's incandescent capacities to an educational fiction.

### **Who's Doing the Taking? Whose Success? Explication by Other Means**

The *skeptron* is passed to the orator before he begins his speech so that he may speak with authority (...) It is an attribute of the person who brings a message, a sacred personage whose mission is to transmit the message of authority - *Benveniste* (cited in Bourdieu & Passeron)

The authority of those who teach is very often a hindrance to those who wish to learn...Our minds are bound and controlled...enslaved and captivated by the authority of [the master's science]. We have been so subject to our leading-strings that we have lost all freedom of movement. Our vigor and independence are extinct. '[We] never cease to be under guidance'...and the imagination [can] conceive no *grandeur* more exalted than his master's' - *Montaigne*

Above, Montaigne sums up the captivating and gravitational logic of explication, where (as Montaigne continues) learners become - ere they congeal - eternally fixed to the potter's wheel. While explication could be surely 'isolated' as a 'technical-rational' enterprise that molds clay, one purpose of my first chapter was to examine how explication is continued on progressive and emancipatory frequencies - and even within 'dialogical pedagogies' that openly rebuke outcome-based paradigms or utility-maximizing operations (associated with more traditional-technical aims of schooling). As Ellsworth (1994) demonstrates, teachers can make equality, social justice, critical

thinking, or the ‘democratic’ empowerment of student voice the goal of the *course* while inscribing inegalitarian relations into the *class*.

In this section, I’d like explore this paradox by re-framing a basic question asked by R.S. Peters: Whose *success*, exactly, are we talking about in schools, that of the teacher - or that of the learner?

Starting with Montaigne’s metaphor, the potter spins his clay: success is achieved when the student approximates the ‘grandeur’ of the master’s science or status. The spinning master matriculates a kind of homunculus that speaks, gestures, or performs just like the teacher. As threadbare as the ‘clay’ cliché may be, isn’t too far off from that scene in *Sponge Bob* when the octopus re-sculpts his novice’s ‘nose’. And as silly as that image may seem, Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) demonstrate how, in classroom performances, teachers (as envoys of the institution) tend to occupy a theatrical center-stage where their (accredited) speech acts, gestures, and dramatic performances are recited, reiterated, and (re)embodied by students. Here, the teacher’s integral knowledge, as well as various classroom acts, routines, and ritualized role-relations, are - in no less concrete terms - ‘reproduced’ in and by learning spectators. Again, in parallel with whatever information or skill-sets the teacher imparts, what is internal to the imparting is a distribution of given (authority) roles and in/capacities, theatrical marks to hit, and distances to (maintain and) to reduce.

As Gallop (1995) approaches the argument, learners *impersonate* the theatrical figure in the role of the teacher, even if teachers themselves are taking up iterable ‘roles’ that are already a ‘public form’ of ‘show business’ (p. 17). That is to say, students

impersonate teachers who have themselves assumed ‘masks’ - are playing a part or executing stylized performances - where the very distinction between what’s a ‘real’ role/identity and what’s theater/impersonation is (always already) irrevocably blurred. In this sense, too, Bourdieu & Passeron’s (1990) account of the theatrical and imitative dimensions of performance in schools footlights the arbitrary, conventional, and ritually-enacted aspects of ‘given’ pedagogical op/positions and seemingly ‘natural’ role-relations. At the same time, they also emphasize the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of trying to ‘escape’ this institutional theater, the stage boards of ecclesiastical transactions, thus arguing that pedagogical hierarchies - and associated symbolic, practical, and theatrical conventions - are fatalistically (re)embodied and, as it were, generationally passed forward with the consecrated role itself.

If classroom identities and performances - and the suppositions that govern them - are arbitrary (or ‘fictional’, in Jacotot’s sense of this term), then the reproductive fatalism of Bourdieu’s conclusions might at least be countered by the assumption that it’s possible to *re-enact* other performances, performances that re-script the rules of the game, retire certain masks or ‘authoritative’ dramas and their respective ‘modes of address’ (as well as their respective estimations of success).

As for the question of impersonation and educational success, teachers may - implicitly or explicitly - define educational success in terms of the student’s impersonation of *them*. Here, much of Gallop’s anthology on ‘pedagogy and impersonation’ tends to indicate that pedagogical ‘success’ arrives at the expense of learners, where creative agency is in fact kneecapped by the teacher’s desire to ‘reproduce’ themselves in the learning other, or to ‘interactively’ tease out student

utterances/acts that corroborates the teacher's own enlightened discourse, ethics, tastes, attitudes, distinctions. Thus, in coming 'face to face with difference' (a student) the person in the role of the teacher may work to reproduce in that 'incommensurable other...a version of oneself' (Simon, 1995, p. 90). Or as Joyrich (1995) adds, teachers may seek to 'reproduce' in the learner an 'ideal subject that [the teacher] can never be' (p. 51).

In this case, explicative co-occurrence 'happens' not as some clear-cut technical-rational enterprise, but through the most convivial modes of dialogue and 'community' negotiation - practices that would, in theory, empower 'student voice' and democratic agency. In this context, Otte (1995) could be seen to explore the octopus' desire for fusional 'coincidence', swapping out a sculptural form ('a nose') for a linguistic-textual recital (a 'voice'). As Otte argues, whether the 'voice' that is being 'advocated [by teachers] is supposedly acclimating itself to academia or authenticating itself, what's really sought is the master's voice. Teachers want to hear themselves' - that is, they want to hear their own voice 'in-voiced' as the 'authentic voice' emanating from their students (p. 150). To play on Otte's wording, the master subtly 'in-voices' and, at the same time, serves an 'invoice', where the teacher is *paid back* when his or her voice is *played back* - or ventriloquated - by the learner.

As a form of discursive-linguistic competency, Lather (1991) gets at this same fusional ambition in 'liberational' contexts when she refers to the tacit compensation teachers get when student performances begin to mirror their own. Here, success is defined in terms of those shifts in disposition or awareness when and where the critical educator recognizes a 'sea change' in their students' attitudes, perspectives, or speech



performances - the 'dream-come-true' of every (critical) pedagogue (p. 136). And this dialogically-achieved 'sea change', which is typically performed by our 'good students', is recognizable because our 'good students have located themselves in the positions in which we speak' (Amirault, 1995, p. 72).

Some of these arguments above are couched in psychoanalytic frame (miasma) that seeks to unveil what teacher's supposedly desire, and how narcissistic desires are unwittingly rewarded through symbolic exchanges in the classroom. Wertsch (1991) however offers a more superficial analysis of the practical, work-a-day classroom 'speech events' that routinely enact the same aggregative - or consensus-oriented - process of shifting students toward the position in which 'we speak' or (in what may amount to the same thing) the lack-based place from which 'they' should struggle.

As Wertsch first notes, however, the dialogical relationship between teacher and student shouldn't be reduced to a monolith cause-and-effect 'apparatus' where teachers simply colonize *tabula rasa* learners with their impinging Voices. On the bright side, this means that no total or unequivocal broadcast/banking effect can be pedagogically 'realized'. Thus, heterogeneous meaning 'elements' can't be exhausted and 'mediated actions' (in classrooms) may have a wide range of unintended consequences (Wertsch, 1991, p. 38).

On the other hand, Wertsch (1991) examines how the various 'guiding practices' of the teacher's speech acts may nevertheless function like *intramental* interventions whereby the speech genres and discursive cues of the teacher can 'populate' - or possibly hijack - the speech of others, and 'populate' speech in such a way that learner speech-acts

may begin to resonate, or become increasingly ‘co-incident’, as it were, with the path (*discursum*) of the guiding teacher (p.115).

As Wertsch argues, speakers ‘interanimate’ each other’s discourse and meaning-making acts in-and-through speech performances. An in-voiced (teacherly) utterance (or a corresponding ambient gesture) may solicit forms of student ventriloquation - or, alternately, silence voices that might not resonate with a disciplinary ‘speech genre’ and the specific genre’s ‘patterns of privilege’ (p. 147). Moreover, the tactical *rephrasing* of a learner’s spoken words by the teacher may in turn ‘bridle’ the learner’s ‘replies’ to the ‘riding master’ (Jacotot’s term, IS, 59), in this way prompting speakers toward - or excluding them from - the frequency of the teacher’s own disciplinary ‘genre’ (whose obvious ‘good sense’ may be corroborated by the performances of the teacher’s more ‘sensible’ students) (Wertsch, 1991, p.115-116).

In Wertsch’s view, teachers and learners do not necessarily (or even usually) share the same unequivocal ‘speech genres’, the same ‘complex’ of language practices, for narrating or describing situations, objects, or events (p. 72). However, in a way that brings a distribution of the sensible to mind, Wertsch also suggests that ‘the ways teachers often organize classroom discourse reflects that [*their* disciplinary] speech genre *should* be used to describe objects and events’ (p. 116). In this given ‘distribution’, then, teachers constantly materialize the ‘distance’ between ‘unequal’ positions, methods, and speech registers - then gradually reduce the distance by drawing auditors into the speaker’s discursive or disciplinary fold. As Wertsch characterizes ‘interanimation’, teacher’s are constantly ‘switching [speech] registers’, constantly recouping learner speech so as to gradually shift it to the teacher’s side of the discursive-linguistic register.

This composes a two-fold distance for the teacher to command-and-reduce: the distance to a relatively secure/stable object of knowledge and, once again, the distance to a privileged method of knowing (e.g., ‘a knowing how’ to ‘reply’ in a ‘sensible’ way).

Translated back into Rancière’s idiom, explication does not *recognize* the ignorant one’s reply - or activity/form of (self)representation - as an equal expression of intelligence (science). Instead, the speech genre of the ‘ignorant’, their way of representing states-of-affairs and their positions within them, is symptomatic of an unlearned discourse/method and, as such, is transformed into a self-evident manifestation of lack - a deficit-distance to fill-reduce. As Wertsch (1991) concludes, through the ongoing ‘course of...interactions [students] give way to the teacher: they have capitulated to her [speech genre] as an appropriate ground for describing objects’ (p. 117).

Even non-traditional pedagogies that assert free-wheeling dialogue or the empowerment of student voice risk formatting those voices into resonance. Pedagogies of (the critical) voice may validate certain ‘interpretations and sense making’ while silencing or marginalizing other ‘voices and interpretations’ (Ellsworth, 1994, p. 323). What’s more, in critical contexts, students are commonly seen as ““empowered” when the teacher “helps” students to express their subjugated knowledge’ (p. 309). Arguably, to ‘help’ students voice this subjugated knowledge - the knowledge that the teacher considers liberating - implies helping persons come to know and understand themselves as a subjugated category or class of personhood. Here, what de Certeau (1998) calls the ‘recapture of speech’ relies upon parallel ‘strategies’ through which individuals are enlisted into disciplinary worlds and expert meaning systems, or are enrolled into social projects/struggles that are ‘not their own’ (p. 17). And to that extent, individuals are

positioned in subordinate relation to those steering authorities that would presume to ‘make sense’ and ‘speak for’ them (as well as *re-explain* events - what just happened at street level, what individuals just did or said - in terms of the expert’s own overarching narrative/science and/or speech genre).

As I’ve done it, re-capture speech, there’s really nothing like a single, well-timed word to displace the word of another. And by confidently dislocating someone’s word, one risks authoritatively relocating the other into the speaker’s own world. At the same time, the speaker - by populating the speech of others with defining words and intentions - also risks delivering a buzz-kill blow to the other person’s sense of involvement - a short-circuiting of someone else’s ‘sense-making’ erotics. On this playing field, ‘the will [of the ‘smart guy’] no longer attempts to figure out and be figured out. It makes its goal the other’s silence, the absence of reply, the plummeting of minds into the material aggregation of consent’ (IS, 82).

As I’m reading Wertsch, he takes the classroom question, ‘Whose success are we talking about?’, and reframes it in a Bakhtinian idiom that asks: ‘Who is doing the talking?’ - ‘Who owns [the] meaning?’ (p. 67). For Wertsch, the Bakhtinian answer is always at least *half someone else*. But in the case of a pedagogical relationship, this ‘half-someone else’ is frequently the person in the ‘role’ of the teacher, a buzz-killing ‘smart guy’ or, as Gallop’s book (variously) suggests, the institutional envoy who’s in the privileged position of holding ‘the microphone’.



Figure 10. Laminated Forkbed from *In the Faculty Room* (1998-2000)

In a dramaturgical mode, then, the teacher both ‘intermediates’ (parts out the curricular sequences, scenes, rehearsals) and also ‘interanimates’ (strategically throws the expert voice - at the right moments - into the cinematic mix). Subtly or not, the teacher links ‘sense with sense’. Beyond ‘who’s doing the talking’, the next question might be: What is thus learned *through* the capitulation? As Wertsch’s field observations indicate, teachers are effective in ‘throwing their voices’, but are also successful in dialogically ‘populating’ the time and space of learning with explication’s unstated message: one can’t act, do, or speak (competently) without re/mediating forms, guiding inter-animations, or the proper (disciplinary) scaffolding (*i.e.*, a hearable speech genre). As Wertsch observes, the ‘dialogical’ dynamic is sporadically characterized by student surrender - a ‘giving in’ to the teacher’s authoritative discourse/performance.

In this distribution of capacities, learners do not engage *head on*, under their own power. Instead, forms of discursive-linguistic competency prefigure ‘hearable’ speech performances. In turn, a horizon of ‘empowering’ utterances becomes evaluable (includible or excludible) in terms how the performance reiterates the expected model or

the given 'science'. In explication, the scenes of learner engagement are recirculated through the expert speaker who orders sensible presentations and speech-events in such a fashion that the educative drama can't really continue (- meaningfully -) without the teacher's tactical solicitations or interanimations. Implicitly, this returns the 'knowledge of ignorance' to the 'dialogical' educator, putting the explicator in the authorial - but also in the mobile and moving - position to filmstrip events, to navigationally (re)align what's seen/felt with what's articulable (and in what 'sensible' registers).

Beyond direct 'speech acts', other ambient (non-discursive) cues, gestures and textures may work to aesthetically align what's felt/perceptible with the route of the author/teacher. Just as a musical score may, in the movies, function as a means of telegraphing the 'proper' emotional response to spectators, teachers may, in the same proximal ways, communicate - or reformat - the path (*discursum*) by exerting stylized gestures/gazes (*etc.*) - performances that suppress a certain responses or elicit intended effects, an 'authorial pathos', or a 'good' reply - or help decide what comes next in the frame.

If capitulation is another way of saying stultification, then what is hollowed out in this dynamic is the self-sufficiency of the intellectual *acts* of learners. In the dialogical dynamic that Wertsch describes, the explicator is always *there* - verbally or gesturally - in the cinematic mix, as a resident (resonant) pastiche of intra-diegetic voiceovers or discursive frequency tweaks. On film or off, the expert is the proximal agent who, step by step, shows learners that one knowledge (or, in this case, one speech genre) is both 'different' and 'better' than 'other ways' of knowing, describing, and expressing. On top of that, if you're like me, the moderator of speech may in fact 'know' and 'say' some

things about open texts, partial knowledges, or multi-voiced (polyphonic) worlds and discourses without actually being able to hear the (more remote) voices of others. Or the (critical) moderator may ‘auto-populate’ someone’s speech, appending a question or (re)mapping an utterance’s trajectory before it even leaves the speaker’s mouth. Or, like a writer building an argument, the moderator may re-coup the ‘words’ and ‘intentions’ of others, re-phrasing them into his own ‘monologue’ so as to make them ‘fit...’[*snap*] the ‘superior plan...’[*crack*] of ‘the author’[*pop*]) (Booth, cited in Bakhtin, 1984, xxiii, bonebraking mine).

Twisting an aesthetic argument - Bakhtin’s (1984) discussion of the polyphonic novel - into educational contexts, the [Aristotelian] art [of teaching] binds characters to the closed text and that text’s objectives, its ‘finalizing artistic vision’: the characters - as ‘objects’ serving the text’s purpose - are rendered ‘stable and fixed, like a plastic sculpture’ (p. 51). Within the closed ‘monological’ text that Bakhtin describes - and that Ellsworth evokes, I think, as an educational logic - the characters ‘coincide with [themselves]...in the monological unity of an artistic world’ (p. 51).

However, in the ‘polyphonic’ artwork described by Bakhtin, characters (regardless of their stature in the text) are treated as dynamic ‘subjects’, as irreducible voices enacting their own (unpredictable) trajectories - even at the cost of the ‘unity’ of the work and its formal rules or conventions (e.g., like ‘plot-compositional elements’, character hierarchies/character arcs, resolution/closure, or whatever technical demands bound up with classical-realist ends). For Bakhtin, the ‘multi-voiced’ novel does not demand nor try to elicit aggregation, thematic agreement, or dialogical resolution. In fact, the ‘dialogical’ issue is *not* even about talking or dialogue, per se. As I see it, it is about

how particular ‘subjects’ (full-fledged consciousnesses) are esteemed regardless of where they ‘fit’ in any governing plan or genre system, and how they are furnished with the capacities and latitudes to *really* think, act, and ‘represent themselves’ through their own activity (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 49-51).

In the polyphonic artwork, characters are unfixed, undefined, unfinalized (p. 50). The author of the polyphonic form confers to the character a ‘self-consciousness’ that is non-identical to the author’s own and, as such, a ‘voice’ that is incompatible with any ‘mono-ideational framework of the ordinary sort’ (p. 78). Thus ‘enjoying...relative freedom and independence’, the subject’s ‘voice’ is disincorporated from any monological ‘design’ that would make the character ‘lie in a single plane’ with, and alongside, the author, and ‘in the unified world of the author’ (pp. 47-49). So emancipated (my interpolation), the polyphonic character ‘never for an instant coincides with himself...does not fuse with the author, does not become a mouthpiece for his voice’ (p. 51). While I’m surely bonebreaking Bakhtin’s own intentions, I’m also suggesting that the aesthetic properties of the polyphonic novel are paralleled in Jacotot’s notion of intellectual emancipation, and in the type of ‘aesthetic education’ that is basic to that notion.

Here, one can make the fusional explanation that teachers are monological ‘authors’ who, as such, desire to hear their own voices played back to them, or perhaps fantasize about seeing the teleological sea-change in the student which becomes, as it were, the still waters upon which the teacher’s own countenance is reflected back. Or one could more plainly suggest that those in the (embodied) role of the teacher are themselves



ventrilloquating, impersonating, or 'thrilling to' the same scenes and in-voiced and in-voicing routines that 'they/we' (may have) inhabited as 'good students'.

Whatever the case, the dialogical 'path' of the (Socratic) co-learner - who theatrically dissembles ignorance - represents the most 'formidable form of stultification', precisely because it restages explication as a 'method of interrogation that pretends to lead the student to his own knowledge...From detour to detour, the student's mind arrives at a finish line that couldn't have been glimpsed at the starting line. He is surprised to touch it, he turns around, he sees his guide, the surprise turns to admiration, and that admiration stultifies him. The student feels that, alone and abandoned to himself, he would not have followed that route' (IS, 59).

If the supposedly open path ends up in consent (the 'plane' of monological unity), then stultification happens - is embodied - in the course of class events, *vis-à-vis* all those teacherly interludes that would catch 'the stumbling', rein speech in - endorse, pooh-pooh, or auto-populate certain acts of representation - or recapture speech in *other words*. Finally, if what learners *do* is always an effect of these 'half-someone else' causes, detours, and intramental vignettes, then it could be said that student agency is continuously placed, as it were, under the sign of the 'half-baked'.

# SCHOOLED

They have their names and each, and all  
Come at the summons of their master's call  
- Martial



### **Impersonation, Circles of Power & the Power of Ignorance**

*Rather than teach a law course in French, [Jacotot] taught the students to litigate in Flemish. They litigated very well, but he still didn't know Flemish.*

As Jacotot describes intellectual emancipation, universal teaching simply verifies what any learner always already does *prior to* explication's double-inaugural gesture. Universal teaching, then, is less a 'method' to be promoted (by top-down administrators) than a kind of informal *grimoire* that intends a 'might be' - equality, creative capacity, autodidactic agency - and then 'verifies' that intention into action - and then witnesses the doing. This means there is no framing double-lack, no closed text or filmic continuum to part out and reduce toward the foreseen *dénouement*.

By contrast, an *ignorant* schoolmaster can't really populate the path with discursive cues or in-voiced leading strings. If, as Bakhtin would have it, 'who is doing the talking is always [at least] two voices' (Wertsch, 1991, p. 63), then Jacotot shifts his own voice to a different key, a register that, while no less interrogative, *is* nevertheless *divided* from the intelligence of learners, set apart from what learners do - or make intelligible - on their own paths. In ignorance, or by simply teaching what one does 'not know', the teacher 'will not verify what the student has found; [s]he will verify that the student has searched' (IS, 31): the teacher will verify attention, the act of 'the will' that is engaged in something serious.

For Jacotot, the point is not to prove that all intelligences are equal (a recipe for yet more explication), but to see what *might* happen when equality is presupposed as a

point of departure, to see what ‘might be’ in the ‘doing’ (IS, 73). As Rancière concluded a chat at the University of British Columbia: ‘Hey, [*shrug, a glance to the rafters*] why not *try* something [a logic of creative capacity based on the equality of intelligence] that hasn’t really been tried out yet’?<sup>9</sup>

If tried out, then, what consequences *might* equality engender (when anyone acts on the axiom that anyone else can truly understand, think, or do)? As for magical elements, Otte (1995) sets the notion of ‘in-voicing’ on its head, here, by suggesting that if writing students should imitate anything or ventriloquate anyone, then it should not be what’s proximal - what’s closest to an assessed need, or to what a teacher might expect or want - but, conversely, to ask learners to assume a *distant* position, that is to say, ‘in-voicing...identities not their own’ (p. 150), and/or taking up of positions of actual competency. Opposing the logic of graduated rehearsals, Otte makes the case that ‘a student who inhabits some fictive scenario, who “pretends” to write from the position of a public figure or literary character, shows a rhetorical sophistication well beyond what might have been taught or expected’ (p. 150). The scare quotes around ‘pretends’ suggests (to me) that the student who pretends is not simply playing ‘make-believe’, but is in some way really inhabiting the position - performing the talent/competency - that they are supposedly only impersonating. The students thus perform as if they ‘are’ these far-flung figures or competent agents: they act as writers, then, but also take a voice that is not themselves (in integral self-identity to place, or in self-coincidence within a closed

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<sup>9</sup> This is, as Wertsch would warn, an example of ‘reported speech’ (*shrug* and *glance* included), not to mention an insertion of commentary about what was ostensibly uttered.

world that has systematically contained the scope of possible acts, images, statements, gestures, moves, etc.).

Otte's fictive as if captures, I think, the spirit of Sponge Bob's early works. And in a no less material way, this *as if* (of equality) brings to mind Jacotot's *Telemaque* experiment (as well as resonates with those artistic roles and thinking identities acted out - or improbably in-voiced - by the worker-artists from *The Nights of Labor*).

In 'act', then, the identity one *takes* is an identity that is performed as make-believe; and in make-believe, the theatricality of the act might blur the solidity of hierarchal role-relations, of fixed categories of identity or incapacity. By assuming what would otherwise be a distant talent, learners pre-empt explication's 'art of distance': they elude the allocation of known or classed identities (which would constitute the remoteness to a model qualification).

Arguably, these games of impersonation - verified *sans* pedagogical security or scaffolding - might confound a performer's *sense* of class(room) identity: by performing 'out of place', one supplements one's given identity with a distant - but no less 'real' - mode of doing. Such a supplemental act might even refute a given *lack-bound* classification since what is *done* is, in fact, a proof of aptitude that persons display to themselves. Such proofs, then, de-synchronize or discoordinate learning 'characters', as it were, from their expected social-pedagogical places.

Here, a 'fictive scenario' - playing pretend - imitating Michelangelo - or acting like a literary 'persona' - all of these ways of doing largely arrest (or simply ignore) explication's 'constitution of the incapable'. The crucial point, though, is that these

improvisational modes of acting throw into question what's *pretense* and what's *reality* (Gallop, 1995). That is to say, a performance of equality irrevocably blurs what's 'playing pretend' and what's the 'serious play' of a real mode of agency, a real way of being a serious player in the game. By testing equality, Jacotot suspends any necessary link 'between accreditation and act' (IS, 15), between certified actors and demonstrations of capacity (that is, a performance by an improper actor who, in the given order of things, would not otherwise not count, or be counted, as a competent agent). In order to see what might happen, Jacotot in a sense asks them to play without security, and to impersonate the 'accredited' *in* 'act'.

By taking up the role-play of the qualified or institutionally-consecrated, it's possible to say that the *necessity* of fixed identities and hierarchal roles might - *through* these acts - start to lose its 'natural' sheen, its 'unconstructed' self-evidence, or the weight of social authority or, as it were, the ritual/routine gravity of habit. At the same time, an unauthorized act or performance thus *alters* the landscape of the describable, and what's possible for (certain) persons to do or to take part in. As Otte's case suggests, supposing equality or competency - even as a magical game of *make-believe* - can get an unforeseen *reality effect*.

If inequality can make inequality happen, then the opposite can surely be the case with equality. The kind of 'impersonation' above - which is, apparently, 'really' doing something - thus opens onto a 'regime of belief' about what's possible. When an intelligence reveals itself *to* itself (in act), it may be that learners are introduced - or more precisely, introduce themselves - into a self-implicative circuit of incandescent capacity (what Jacotot calls a 'circle of power').

The circle of power parallels, I think, what Chantal Mouffe calls a ‘reflexive view of agency’. Citing Mouffe, Nadesan & Elenes (1998) argue (in educational contexts) that ‘reflexive agency [an agency that perceives itself in action] is an essential ground for the experience of self-determination’ (p. 253) What Mouffe focuses on, here, are the ‘social conditions that produce subjectivities that experience a will to act and that experience self in terms of reflexive agency: [and as Mouffe herself states] “What is at stake is the constitution of an ensemble of practices that make possible specific forms of subjectivity and individuality”’ (Nadesan & Elenes, 1998, p. 254). Thus, ‘imagine a social discourse whose nodal point was constituted by a desire to develop the student’s reflexive agency’ (p. 255) (rather than an abstract ‘understanding’ of the situation).

In Jacotot’s notion of universal teaching, this ‘nodal point’ is the supposition of equality, where one acquires the authority to think, act, or do *through* acts of thinking and doing. No less important than a ‘social discourse’, in my view, is a different type of *educational theater* - a theater *through* which the discourse of equality - and its forms of self-reflexive agency - can be enacted and audienced (v.).

Here, Lave & Wenger make intelligible just such a figure or ‘nodal point’ for self-reflexive agency. For Lave & Wenger (1991), the educational point is to get *learning* outside of ‘the structure of pedagogy as the source of learning’ (p. 113) and into the ‘actional’ fields of social practice and improvisational doing where *in situ* learning does not require mastering how to ‘do school’ *first* (p. 107). Starting, then, with a ‘decentered view’ of the master-apprentice relationship, what Lave & Wenger call ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ implies direct *access* to technologies of ‘expert’ performance in *learning-by-doing* environments. Breaking from what they call the ‘teaching curriculum’,

Lave & Wenger elaborate a notion of a 'learning curriculum' (p. 97). Whereas the teaching curriculum structures resources and 'controls access' to experiences, to mediating technologies, and to meanings (where meaning is typically 'mediated through an instructor's participation [with] an external view of what knowing is about'), the 'learning curriculum...consists of situated opportunities for the improvisational development of a new practice', a mode of doing or playing which is not 'constructed for the instruction of newcomers' (p. 97). And what these kinds of 'actional' practices do, then, is shift learning 'out of the head', out of the abstract space of 'verbal' and (asymmetrically) 'interpersonal' instruction, and plunge it directly into observational, imitative, and generative modes, where the learning 'agent, the activity, and the world mutually constitute each other' (p. 33). In this learning game, as it were, a 'pragmatic' performance (re)constitutes a 'given', constative, reality; meaning is (always already) thrown into the acts of (re)making meanings; and the 'actual use' of *in situ* words and cultural artifacts *inseparably* shapes the meaning of them, and of identities and social relations - even the meaning of the artifacts, words, and tools being 'actually used' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1990, pp. 100-102).

If such performative acts are, as Lave & Wenger argue, always 'situated' in-the-doing, they are at any rate *un-situated* from the teaching curriculum, the method that installs the master as the 'locus' of authority, as the dramaturge who metes out the 'resources' and links contiguous preparations together. Breaking with explication, a learning curriculum puts 'legitimate' doing before any sanctioned readiness-to-do. The teacher provides access to the resources for playing the game, puts the 'self-reflexive'



action before the accreditation, stages the performance before the competence (Cazden, 1981).

As with intellectual emancipation, self-reflexive agency has no proper design, end, or correct expression to reproduce, but is simply the *fait accompli* capacity to perform (in Gallop's sense of the term) or to 'aestheticize' (in Gauney's sense of the term) one's world as if one is the equal of anyone else - as if one could, in principle, swap places with 'the master', that is to say, exchange creative capacities and do the same kinds of acts. Here, in Lave & Wenger's (1991) notion of what it means to learn, 'mastery resides not in the master' (p. 94). Mastery itself is decentered: it is no longer a property of the role or an intellectual identity to obtain, but is made 'actional', or sited within the (me, too) activity. Thus, 'a decentered view of the master as pedagogue moves the focus of analysis away from teaching' (p. 94) and into 'the set[s] of relations among persons, activity, and world' (p. 98).

In Rancière's argument, this mode of performance - and its logic of emancipation - comes from witnessing one's own intelligence in action *in media res*. One thus emancipates others not by instructing, but by putting situations in play where an intelligence 'reveals' itself to itself in act. As a way of thinking Jacotot's circle of power (or powerlessness), Lave & Wenger (1991) argue that 'learning and a sense of identity are inseparable. They are aspects of the same [performative] phenomenon' (p.115).

Here, emancipation - or the question of acting - is much less about understanding things than about doing things, about experimenting in 'the gap between accreditation and act' (IS, 15). And as Rancière argues, getting someone to understand 'domination' -

their putative condition or situation as dominated beings - is not (or at least has not proven itself to be) a causal formula for agency or transformative self-determination (AFI). Rather, the formula for agency is agency. Or at least, that's the thing to 'try out' or put into 'legitimate' play: modes of acting-and-thinking where persons perceive themselves sharing a common (though in no way consensual) world of speech, action, and imitative/creative doing.

Pedagogically speaking, it's possible to argue that there are forms of 'aesthetic education' that enable or disable that sense of being-in-agency, of being-in-an-equal-position to engage in a common process of (re)framing a (possible) world(s). If Mouffe's notion of reflexive agency can be likened to Jacotot's circle of power, doing equality puts anyone in the 'polemical' (Rancière) or 'agonistic' (Mouffe) position to engage in processes that might supplement a 'closed text' - or dissensually refigure 'the configuration of a given situation (*données sensibles*) and construct the forms of a world to come within the existing world' (PTA, 83).

Conversely, explication always already absorbs any polemical (or polyphonic) breathing room to engage perceptible materials (differently) or to interrupt the systematic linking of 'sense with sense'. Instead of a varied assortment of stories, images, and (accidental) vantage points - a multiplicity of worlds that don't coincide, are not co-mappable, or offset one another in contrast - there is the self-evident world and the explicator's book. Borrowing Mouffe's idiom, explication makes little room for 'the adversary'. At the same time, to explicate means to enervate the embodied feeling - and the belief - one is involved, or even could be involved, in shared ways of (re)thinking, (re)enacting, or (re)figuring a 'given situation'.

## The Logic of Gaps: The Polyphonic Theater

Explication - as circle of powerlessness - might be understood in terms of a 'set of actions' that delimit or constrain the perceptions and the sets-of-actions of (relational) others. Here, drawing upon Ellsworth's critique of 'empowering' pedagogies, Lather (1991) states that the assumption that intellectuals/pedagogues can liberate an 'as-yet-unliberated' Other perpetuates the 'relations of dominance' (p. 15). The liberator becomes 'the bearer' of relations that oppress, the sets of actions that contain the perceptions and performances of others. To break this distribution of roles and relations and its endless 'circle', as it were, the teacher can, as Lather suggests, position herself 'elsewhere' than the master: that is, teachers can position themselves 'elsewhere than where the "Other" is the problem for which "we" are the solution' (p. 138). And this implies taking 'a position' - or *re*-enacting another role - where teachers 'are no longer the origin of what can be known and done' (p. 138).

Through explication, origins are turned into destinations (or destinations are involuted back into origins). Either way you flip it, the destination becomes *the* distance to progressively reduce for the learning other, and inequality is reinstated. Using Bakhtin's (1984) polyphonic aesthetic form as educational metaphor, by discontinuing these 'causal' and 'coordinating' positions, the (polyphonic) author 'transfers' his/her dramaturgical capacities to the character's 'own field of vision': what was once 'a firm and finalizing authorial definition' is turned into an aspect of the character's 'self-definition' (p. 49). (Or what once defined and finalized the 'role' of the teacher - the origin of what is known and done - is made an aspect of the learner's own 'self-conscious' agency). With this aesthetic *redistribution* of vantage points and capacities,

the 'external world and the everyday life surrounding' the character 'cannot serve as causal or genetic factors' in the service of narrative ends, nor to 'fulfill in the work any explanatory function...the hero becomes free and independent, because everything in the author's design that had defined him and, as it were, sentenced him...[to be] a completed image of reality, now no longer functions as a form for finalizing him, but as the material of his self-consciousness' (pp. 49-51). No longer occupying the same 'plane' as the 'monological author', the 'external world' becomes an 'objective fact for other consciousnesses: what the [polyphonic artwork] foregrounds are the privileges of the other (p. 290)... *a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*' (p. 6, emphasis in original, bonebreaking mine).

As an aesthetic model, the polyphonic theater, so to speak, refuses to make a learner co-extensive with 'the design': the learner is never 'equivalent with the plot', does not 'shadow' the authorial teacher/designer. For Bakhtin, this implies two things at once: it means 'transferring' capacities to the other and, by doing so, transforming 'the other person from a shadow into an authentic reality' (p. 10). As for the path of the other (learner), it can't be anticipated: catharsis, a conventional resolution, a unified meaning or singular thematic outcome is 'not applicable' in the polyphonic novel (p. 165), precisely because the characters - now *valid* consciousnesses - no longer conform to the design.

Opposing the logic of stagism, gradualism, and progress, the world or state-of-affairs is never unveiled to the other as it 'is', but remains radically ongoing, open, and *unfinalizable*: 'the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been

spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 66).

By ignoring self-evident origins - and by separating learners from the causal and genetic logic of (the) explication, teachers can renounce any supposed difference (or gap) between the student-in-scarcity and the teacher-in-abundance, and thereby relinquish the pedagogical ideal of wanting to be, or even thinking one *can* be, the enlightened 'cause' of an 'other's' emancipated 'effect' (Lather, 1991, Ellsworth, 1994, Rancière, *ES*).

Enacting equality implies renouncing that art of distance, as well as the op/positional gap - or hierarchal distribution of bodies - that's structured into that distance. Instead, the knowledge of ignorance - or 'double-lack' - is itself ignored (*ES*). From *there*, the teacher can't take the place of any far-seeing dramaturge who 'originates' *this* lesson, stimulates *that* desired outcome, coordinates *this* affect or ethical effect, or stages *that* community of 'voice' for others. There is no stultification because the knowledge the student acquires - what the student feels, does, and makes intelligible - is not the master's knowledge. Accordingly, the distance that learners navigate is not the 'master's secret': it's the student's 'own journey' (*IS*, 23). The external world, the learner, and the teacher are never harmonized into a single plane, or united in 'intramental' coincidence.

Or as Lave & Wenger (1991) evoke the polyphonic aspects of legitimate peripheral participation, when *acts* of learning are no longer structured by explication, or identified with the 'teaching curriculum', then what learners enact are non-coincident routes. Here, 'dissociating learning from pedagogical intentions opens the possibility of mismatch or conflict among practitioner's viewpoints in situations where learning is going on' (p. 114).

This logic does *not* organize dissent. It simply opens up the spaces and the times - the aesthetic conditions - for 'dissensus' to happen, anywhere and at anytime, and rather unpredictably.

Moreover, when the 'mediating resources' of cultural-creative practices replace 'asymmetrical master-apprentice relations', a 'space' of *benign neglect* comes into play (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 93). This space of 'neglect' is arguably one of chance features of Jacotot's own *Telemaque* experiment - a kind of zone where learners might enact idiosyncratic routes (p. 114), or reconfigure learning relations among other (laterally-situated) learners (p. 93).

In the polyphonic novel, what Bakhtin (1984) takes to be the thematic *content* of the novel (in this case, Dostoevsky's 'affirmation' of the valid consciousnesses of others) meets up with an aesthetic 'principle' (the *formal* verification of characters on an equal footing - characters who really see, act, think, do, and furnished with the breathing room to 'represent themselves' - irregardless of the plot, structural elements, genre laws, unity of the form, or any final reconciliation of whatever conflicts) (pp. 10-11; pp. 49-51).

More importantly, every *act* of an intelligence that teaches itself is a demonstration of (autodidactic) agency: the inhabited self-knowledge of using one's intelligence without guidance - in a word, intellectual emancipation.

Universal teaching arguably puts two polyphonic elements into play at the same time. By renouncing the 'art of distance', an ignorant master disowns the 'gap' between two unlike minds (in relation to the book, image, spectacle, or activity). At the same time that this 'gap' is disowned, the teacher opens up another - experimental - gap: the gap

between a sensation and an effect, things and labels, bodies and names; an experimental gap between a given identity and a (possible) competency, between an assigned role and an (unexpected) performance that does not 'fit' the label or conform to the rules, stature, or classification.

By taking equality as (a what if) starting point, Jacotot disowns the privileges of the first 'gap' (monological, explicational, and narrowly dramaturgical) while experimenting - or testing the polyphonic possibilities of - the second gap: the opened-ended 'gap' between theater and world, between bodies and the estimation of what they 'can do'. The general *what if* of equality puts into play the *as if* of equal capacities - as something that is done *through* the act.

As Jacotot describes the equality of intelligence, there is a will that attends to something and an intelligence that obeys. Intelligence is equal; it 'does' the same things. On the other hand, the will, want, desire, or confidence which drives the intelligence is variable. Jacotot's inference, then, is that there are not 'two sorts of minds...no hierarchy of intellectual capacity' (IS, 27). As Rancière clarifies this, 'the equality of intelligence is not the equality of all manifestations of intelligence. It is the equality of intelligence in all its manifestations' (ES, 17). In Jacotot's way of recognizing intelligent acts - as an effect of wanting, or as an effect of 'volitionalness' (R.S. Peters), or as an 'adverbial function' of 'attending to' something (Jenson & de Castell, 2006) - the intelligence can't be distributed because it does - here, there, or anywhere - the same things: it gropes, figures things out; it decouples elements or relinks them; it translates and expresses; and it copies while coloring outside of the lines. What informs universal teaching is 'the idea that the activity of thinking is primarily an activity of translation, and that anyone is capable of

making a translation. Underpinning this capacity for translation is the efficacy of equality', the supposition of the power of anyone to competently formulate an intelligent 'reply' (PSI, 63).

What Jacotot calls emancipation is reciprocally witnessing that redistribution of equal capacities: thus, it's always an equal intelligence in the expressions and performances of minds and bodies which are *doing the same things* (even if, as de Castell & Jenson point out, teachers may not necessarily 'like' what it is an intelligence is 'attending to'). Finally, this means that universal teaching is not about 'making masterpieces; it's a matter of making the emancipated: people capable of saying, 'me too, I'm a painter' (IS, 67); or persons capable of shouldering onto a common stage where a 'finished' order of things might be supplemented - or re/enacted (differently). As Rancière argues in *Dis-agreement*, where people 'appear' out of place - when 'uncounted' people who say 'me, too' show up to be counted - this is the 'place where a dispute [politics] is conducted' (D, 100). The dispute or dis-agreement is not a discussion between a given set of mutually-recognizable 'speech partners' (nor, then, is it a site where identifiable voices are 'empowered'), but is an 'interlocution that undermines the very situation of interlocution' (D, 100). This undermining happens because those persons who act, story, paint or argue (say, 'me, too') had - *prior* to their *own* performances - no visible or hearable place *in the dialogue*, and were of no 'count' in the prior state-of-affairs, the prior unity of what was 'sensible'.



### ***Me, Too: Classless Bodies & Aesthetic Education***

In this section, I'll examine a notion of 'aesthetic education' in a different context by looking at Bourdieu's work on cultural reproduction. As I'll argue below, Bourdieu enacts a distribution of the sensible that explains why and how certain identifiable persons can't say 'me, too, I'm a painter', or why certain persons can't appear out of place. Instead of verifying the placelessness of talents (Jacotot), Bourdieu elaborates a rationale for social inequality where persons (as social objects) always coincide with themselves (in self-identity with what they 'are'), and where one's place of sociocultural origin (i.e., habitus or class ethos) determines one's destination, or one's reproductive dénouement, as it were.

Bourdieu's assumption pivots on a clear-cut distinction/distribution between two types of aesthetico-cultural capacities, two unequal (and mutually-exclusive) aesthetic aptitudes. In terms of who feels an impression - who's capable of appreciating and sharing sensible data with others - aesthetics (in just one sense) refers to the 'receptive nature' of bodies or, as Rancière qualifies, the sameness or difference of 'sensory equipments'. In Bourdieu's system, his map of the world, a person's sensory-receptive 'nature' is determined in advance by one's 'home' environment, the sensory world that they embody (that is, a specific class habitus that sensuously conditions them to receive/assimilate specific sensible materials and attune themselves to specific aesthetic forms and symbolic practices). As Bourdieu argues in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), differently-located bodies in the cultural-economic field exhibit different

aesthetic faculties based on where they are placed/positioned in that cultural-economic field. In Bourdieu's argument, cultural practices and economic practices fold into one another in a closed-loop (of cause and effect). Bodies are born into, and thus heir to, a 'conditioning' environment. Bodies inhabit and feelingly live out what conditions them. So conditioned, a person's place-based receptive 'nature' anticipates a corresponding class destination, which ends up being identical to one's own class 'origin'.

Bourdieu's object of critique is the aesthetic maxim that would dubiously claim the equal interchangeability of subjects, subjects who share the same capacities to see/feel. To summarize Bourdieu's (1993) argument, the 'pure gaze of art' - that is, the 'pure gaze' of those persons who are equipped to appreciate dominant cultural products and symbolic practices - is determined by cultural position (*habitus*). The person who inherits-inhabits a 'richer' taste is equipped with the gaze that appreciates art (formal culture) while 'misrecognizing' the fact that this gaze is a product of one's privileged location. For Bourdieu, the 'misrecognition' that the gaze of art is actually inherited and learned 'unwittingly establishes [the pure gaze] as a transhistorical norm for every aesthetic perception' (p. 255).

True or false, right or wrong, Kantian aesthetics (at its most basic) assumes the equality of aptitudes, or the universal exchangeability of gazes, as it were. For Bourdieu, however, the 'ideology' of equality in fact conceals the truth of inequality: the 'myth of equality' abets the objective (but veiled) fact that certain bodies and their respective dispositions are determined in advance by where they are located the cultural-economic 'field'. In one sense, the pure gaze of those who appreciate art is not 'natural': competencies are feelingly embodied in-and-through class-defined cultural environments.

Yet the working classes, who are conditioned by a different habitus, are necessarily ill-equipped to receive/exchange the ‘cultural capital’ of the privileged classes. Confronting ‘the sensible’ data of the privileged classes, the lacking exclude themselves (they ‘self-select’) and - like the privileged person - they also ‘unwittingly misrecognize’ the real reasons for their exclusion from games of distinction and from (uncommon) forms of symbolic-exchange.

Above all, here, there is no space for equal communication among different actors in the field, no space for shareable meanings, and no common membership in a single world of feeling and argument.<sup>10</sup> On top of that, there is no room to be ‘out of place’, to blur - or multiply - one’s assignment or class role - no latitude to move, be more than, or to be generically different than what you ‘are’ (conditioned by).

In one sense, Bourdieu first attests to the contingency of roles and social positions. On another level, he explains how those roles, positions, and fates are radically necessary, and how social beings are fatalistically chained to a lawful system of cultural reproduction (a system that is not only beyond their control, but beyond their view/comprehension). Here, Bourdieu arguably extrapolates an educational argument (ironed out in *Reproduction*) to cultural-artistic institutions and everyday forms of symbolic distinction/exchange. Whatever the context, equality is a myth and the myth of

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<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu makes his own clear-cut distinctions between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ gazes, *formal* elements & elementary *contents*, between ‘abstract’ presences & mere pictures that represent objects, stories, or persons: this defines the *difference* between the trained spectator who can vibrate to the ‘pure’ presence of the ‘formal’ image and the (self-excluding) spectator who can’t vibrate to the ‘code’, and therefore can’t vibrate to, or with, the symbolic exchange-systems of ‘dominant cultural arbitrary’. In *Distinction*, the museum thesis is played out with everyday ‘tastes’ for cultural objects, fashions, codes, symbols (where privileged cultural gazes are converted into economic advantages, which are converted back into inherited gazes and status positions, which get converted into institutional-educational successes, marriage contracts, and cultural co-memberships, and then more economic opportunities which...round, round and round...).

equality blinds everyone. The world is ‘distributed’ into two unequal strata (with almost everybody in ‘unwittingness’ about the conditioning causes of social inequality).

And if the educational system - now understanding all of this - ‘wittingly’ mobilizes to help the dispossessed, then the institution must understand ‘their’ lacks, solicit them in ‘their’ place, and address ‘their needs’ with the symbolic rudiments, the developmental stepping-stones, and the material codes and activities that are appropriate to ‘their’ location. The world is thus re-stratified - made aesthetically and intellectually uncommon - in order to progressively reduce the distance between the two divided strata.

Opposing Bourdieu’s system, Rancière makes a different logic (equality) intelligible. Evincing this logic, the workers in *The Nights of Labor* in a sense ignore - and are free to ignore - Bourdieu’s distribution of the sensible. Free to pay no attention to the ‘cause-and-effect’, they are workers who ‘play’ (anyway), persons who insist upon actional forms of ‘creative leisure’ that would be one of the defining attributes of the non-productive (leisure) classes. Thus, they are worker’s who improvisationally leverage art against the necessity of expected (class) roles and how those ‘given’ roles would (in principle) delimit a range of corresponding in/capacities. By acting competently - ‘as if’ - they force open the gap between labels and bodies, between ‘given’ identities and the ensemble of functions or ‘game moves’ appropriate to those identities.

While Bourdieu explains that certain players can’t, Rancière evidences that anyone can. As Rancière puts it, in act or performance, the worker-artist does not ‘believe’ the sociologist (who would confine the disinherited to their place in order to keep the general ‘class struggle’ moving). By doing what they ‘can’t do’ - by somehow

impersonating bodies with so-called pure gazes or poetic callings - the worker-artist makes implausible a clear-cut world 'distributed' into two tastes, two gazes, two types of imagination. By doing what one 'cannot do', an established reality with fixed roles is mixed up, or turned inside out - to the point where fixed identities (e.g., a 'subject of domination' and a 'subject of privilege') are blurred. In order to 'work', Bourdieu's system can't admit the 'carnival' blurring of class(room) roles and competences linked to those fixed roles. There is no place to be a stranger to oneself, that is, to be out-of-place in his system (where one's speech genre, ludic gestures, or chance gazes might be unlinked from the governing law of social location), precisely because Bourdieu makes aesthetic aptitude a function of a certain place and role, and a certain place and role a function of aesthetic aptitude.

The equality of intelligence is no less, then, a supposition about the equality of aesthetic aptitudes. For Jacotot, universal teaching verifies, regardless of place, that it is always a capably unclassifiable intelligence that works manually, thinks abstractly, experiences aesthetically, or 'imagines' - that is, exhibits the serious capacity to sensuously engage perceptible materials - or to play with images, re/enact narratives (otherwise), or re-constellate the 'sensible' forms of everyday life and ways of acting.

As Jacotot phrases this, the 'fabrication of clouds' and the 'fabrication of shoes or locks' are human works of art that demand the 'same labor and intellectual attention' (IS, 37). In every human work there is art, 'in a steam engine as in a dress; in a work of literature as in a pair of shoes' (IS, 43). The point is that there are no working hands or imaginative sensibilities uniquely equipped for - or destined to - one type of fabrication, one form of experience, one related fate. Any fabrication demands and engages the same

powers - fungible capacities that can be brought to bear to any end. Anyone is capable of cultural activities. As Rancière challenges Bourdieu's distribution, there is no 'opposition between the "taste of freedom" specific to persons of leisure and the "taste of necessity" specific to workers of reproduction' (PP, 185). And as an educational supposition, then, there is no opposition 'between those who can and those who cannot afford the luxury of the symbolic' (SP, 51), which I'll translate here as 'the luxury' of doing artistically.

Rancière makes intelligible a way of proceeding that contests any hierarchal distribution that would instate two orders of being, two worlds of unequal valence - a world where certain social beings are predisposed to play with signs, sounds, images, clouds, appearances, etc, and a world others do not share the same dispositions to re/frame worlds or to imitate far-flung talents. Paralleling Lave & Wenger's (1991) approach to competency, any distinction between an imitative act (one that supposedly reproduces community as it is) and a creative act (one that changes situations, generates differences, or refigures the lines) is blurred into, or within, the same 'improvisational' ways of 'in situ' doing, or serious playing (pp. 114-116). And here, any clear division between a 'productive imagination' (lambent, inventive, free-playing, open-to-the-future) and a 'reproductive imagination' (slavish, functional, copy-bound, chained-to-necessity) is thrown out the window. In Rancière writings as a whole, this window would be the one that Gauney 'unnecessarily' looks out of when he appreciates the beauty of a palace vista 'as if' he were the estate's lucky owner (*NL, ES, AK*). For Rancière, this aesthetic gaze 'works on the world of assumption, of the as if, that includes those who are not included by revealing a mode of existence of sense experience [the aesthetic] that has eluded the allocation of parties and lots' (D, 57), has eluded the 'naming' of who is equipped and

who is not. Gauney's 'gaze' thus defies Bourdieu's own social distributions because Gauney gazes in a way that - as Bourdieu's system would have it - is already foreclosed to him in advance. Bourdieu's cutting up of the world into two sensory humanities not only ignores the evidence of equality, but also demands that 'classifiable' persons stay in their proper places for the science (of class struggle) to succeed.

So whose success are we talking about? Within the game field Bourdieu devises, Gauney would likely be sentenced to a double-crime. Not only is the 'worker-artist' a fraudulent 'pretender' (an exception to the rule of the science), he is also a 'worker' who, by doing more what workers can do, betrays his own class by making equality *appear* to be possible. As Rancière argues in *The Philosopher and His Poor*, any 'exception' to the science is recouped by the science: the person who blurs the 'categories' is denounced as a fraudulent pretender - 'a parvenu' - who, by being out-of-place, in fact contributes to concealing the real mechanisms of inequality. Borrowing Bakhtin's novelistic idiom, the author of inequality thus monologically trumps every particular actor: the author trumps every 'out-of-place' performance by a 'subject' who would defy his/her objective and generic emplotment in the author's own explanatory work. Every individual act(or) that rebukes the 'cause-and-effect' - or blurs the generic order of classifications and fixed parts to play - is thus turned into a false appearance, an element of the system itself. Each 'exceptional' act(or) is then re-explicated or re-incorporated (into the plot) as an 'illusion' that helps to better veil the devious operations of the inequality machine.

Lather hits a parallel mark, I think, when she argues that liberation pedagogies depend upon some dominated 'Other' to liberate - be it an oppositional subject of history or an afflicted 'class'. A well-defined object of domination - one that stays in its place -

helps to hold the whole design together. And in this project, 'it is the explicator who needs the incapable and not the other way around; it is he who constitutes the incapable as such' (IS, 6). As Lather argues, emancipatory pedagogies require 'a subject who is an object of our emancipatory desires' (p. 140). And this 'object' is defined (1) by a status of 'victimization' (2) by a latent seed of potential agency (3) by a condition of mystification that ensures the object cannot - by itself - perceive or understand the causes of entrapment/oppression and (4) by the view that the false consciousness (that defines this object) can be transformatively affected by the 'vanguard' who knows (Lather, 1991, p. 138-142). Knowledge is what 'sets people free' (p. 14). And in this 'design', political agency always 'comes after' the explanation, the 'revelation of the state of things' (PTA, 83). Understanding things - getting *there* - will help get the 'object of emancipation' into position to change things or transform their lives. But as Lather contends, getting people to 'understand' their oppression risks enacting the 'pattern of yet another controlling schema' while foreclosing those 'spaces' where 'those directly involved can act and speak on their own behalf' (Lather, 1991, p. 137).

Foucault argues that what needs to be questioned is the causal viewpoint that 'truth is intrinsically opposed to power and therefore inevitably plays a liberating role' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 127). What Rancière adds to Foucault's and/or Lather's arguments is that 'it's not a misunderstanding of the existing state of affairs that nurtures the submission of the oppressed but a lack of confidence in their own capacity to transform it' (PTA, 83) - that is, to perceive themselves as equal players capable of sharing a common space of communication, or as actors capable of taking a shared stage where scenes and practices might be reenacted otherwise.



Gauney arguably makes those ‘involved’ spaces intelligible as a point of departure, just as the painter who says, ‘*me, too*’, makes intelligible an artistic act that blurs a given distribution of roles and distinctions, of sanctioned talents, media forms, and readiesses. The proof, for Rancière, is not in the science but in the picture or the poem - in the artistic *activity* of those who ‘can’t do’ but in fact *do*.

At the same time, Rancière undercuts any romantic view that would celebrate the local or popular as something inherently liberating for ‘others’. Rancière refuses to fetishize the lifeworld of working ‘others’, or to exalt ‘their’ everyday idioms in ways that re-establish the ‘division’ by swapping out a negative (cultural) value for a positive one. In effect, Rancière refuses to *invert* distinctions by exalting the local or the ‘popular’ as something automatically empowering (or to be used as the familiar cultural capital that an emancipator can ‘work with’), or to romanticize so-called working-class culture as the ‘authentic’ expression of ‘the people’ in their organic wonder.

What becomes intelligible is a way of thinking ‘art’ in terms of doing artistically where there is no foothold to parcel out aptitudes or gazes, and thus no *judgment* that could divide the imagination into two camps - or to carve up cultural products into pure or impure media, arts of visual ‘presence’ or arts of ‘signification’, or to judge artistic activities (or their putative aesthetic or political effects) in terms of *any number* of qualitative models to *get to* (or to *stay* within). So, instead of affirming or inverting distinctions, the point, as I see it, is to open up and lateralize elements by putting them under the sign of (possible) equality, where anyone can say *me, too*, and where anyone can be in the same position to ‘play’, to mark - or to montage - their own incandescent distance from ‘the state of things’.

The point would be to take Bourdieu's 'exception' as the rule: to take the *particular* of equality as the point of departure to verify, witness. Educationally-speaking, the crucial point is that by ignoring origins - and by ignoring who we are - an ignorant master discards the notion that different individuals are endowed by position (home-worlds) with dissimilar dispositions, equipments, or curricular needs suitable to 'them'.

As Rancière underscores the argument, 'the legitimacy of domination has always rested on the evidence of a sensory division between different humanities' (AD, 31). While Bourdieu no doubt wants to 'reduce' that inequality, he *evidences* the division - a hierarchal distribution of the sensible - and explicates it as *the* law of the social machine (where one 'class' is endlessly predisposed to engage a 'rich totality of sensible experience' and another 'class' is *un*-equipped for 'gratuitous' ways of sensing, imagining, or doing) (PL, 15). When Jacotot calls his students to 'experiment in the gap between accreditation and act', he asks for an *untimely* performance, one that knows nothing of lack or dispossession - knows nothing of the 'division'. By ignoring who we are, 'anyone' gets to become what they are through their own serious acts of gratuitous play.

### **(3) The Deluded Have Been Beaten Out Of Love**

#### **Arts of Distance: Theater & Counter-Theater**

For Jacotot, teachers enact the pedagogical fiction as an art of distance. If explication's art of distance (and its resultant distribution of the sensible) enacts its own inequalities to reduce, is there a different kind of *distance* - an aesthetic education - that might emancipate?

In chapter one, I discussed one form of critical distance associated with Freire's emancipatory method. Freire identifies a distance that is to be progressively reduced through the technique of 'feasibility testing': in this method, the student is tactically moved through a series of images toward a critical resolution (i.e., conscientization of the social forces of domination that operate upon a given consciousness in a given community). Through a cinematic logistics, a submerged (or 'real') consciousness is thus introduced to various staged contradictions in order to obtain an enlightened (or 'potential') consciousness. In *Cinema Studies* (2000), Hayward explains this 'cinematic logic' as an extension of the classical 'oedipal trajectory', a grammar of ordered actions and rule-bound representations that are put together in the service of happy resolutions, restorative catharses, and/or renewed 'order' (social health).

And like the 'aesthetic engine' described by Ellsworth, this dialectical threading of actions and scenes recapitulates, to some extent, the logic of the Aristotelian 'fable'

based on ‘the arrangement of necessary and verisimilar actions that lead the characters from fortune to misfortune, or *vice versa*, through the careful construction of *intrigue* and *dénouement*’ (FF, 1). As a form of aesthetic education, the link between what is admissible and inadmissible, between ‘sense and sense’, signals the harmonious braiding of affect and idea - the unity of a poetic intention with its anticipated outcomes (in a known community of learner-spectators). As discussed in the previous chapter, Jacotot-Rancière refers to this politics of experience as a cumulative method of aggregation, a means of leading learner-spectators into monological coincidence with the knowledgeable master.

Freire’s critico-aesthetic method arguably enacts this same filmic logic: it begins with various known lacks and continues by filling in the gaps of an *intrigue* that the dramaturge himself sequences (the play of the veiled and of the unveiled; the play of the closed text and the *disclosed* text) that ultimately leads the learner-spectator from slumber to wakefulness. ‘At each stage the abyss of ignorance is dug again; the professor fills it in before digging another. Fragments add up, detached pieces of the explicator’s knowledge that put the student on a trail, following a master with whom he will never catch up’ (IS, 21).

While Freire contrasts his own critical method with banking education (the pedagogical form where authorities deposit facts/knowledge into the compliant heads of passive learners), Freire’s own critical engine, its dialectical threading of presentations and scenes, is not in itself problematized as such, as a *medium* - an aesthetic logic - that determines its own specific politics of the sensible.

On the other hand, the critical tradition presents other strategies (or arts) of distanciation (distinct from Freire's) that pivot less on *leading* students to awareness than on interrogative self-reflection, that is to say, critical reflection upon the theater apparatus itself. To take another page from film theory, this self-referential logic pivots on illuminating 'the apparatus' and explaining the mediating technology *in action*, and by taking the dramaturgical practices (of the school) for what they are: a specific form of theater that, structurally speaking, naturalizes (illusory) roles and reproduces narratives of hegemony. As a means of making the underlying/hidden theatrical apparatus visible, counter-cinema functions by self-referentially displaying 'its very structures and materiality'. That is, it 'makes an exhibition of its signifying practices, draw[ing] attention to the "artifice" of the medium', and thereby revealing the 'artful' interactions and the illusionism of the 'apparatus' itself (Hayward, 2000, p. 29).

Since that's just movie talk, I'd like to look at an educational discussion that elaborates a 'counter-theater' to explication. In her essay, 'In Loco Parentis: Addressing (the) Class', Susan Miller (1995) basically describes the 'pedagogical fiction' in the same way Jacotot describes it: that is, as a 'specific fiction' that 'perpetuates hegemony', even under the banner of so-called equalizing and democratic forms social/institutional practice (p. 161). In her discussion, Miller indicts the hierarchal role-play, the 'artful' performances, and the classifying and/or distributive functions of modern schooling systems (pp. 159-162). Following Foucault, she dramatizes these systems as 'moral technologies' which ultimately depoliticize learner agency by asking learners to, as it were, inhabit the subordinate role-relations of the school and, in turn, to abrogate their own capacities to know, act, perform, or do.

Opposing such stultifying (Jacotot) systems and relations, Miller suggests that the ‘moral technologies’ of the school can be explained to practitioners in classrooms in order to expose the artifice, the mediating forms of ‘regulation’ that enact subordinate roles, and that deny, postpone, or handicap agency in school. In particular, Miller wants illuminate the knowledge/power relations that relationally operate between the knowing pedagogue and the needing student, the student whose various sociological lacks have been ‘tabulated’ in advance (p. 159). Miller’s ultimate aim, inversely, is to transact a different, ‘relational perspective’ in the class, a view that recognizes ‘the real situation and desires of students’ as unknowable and particular individuals (once the explicatory apparatus has been revealed, and the distinction between the ‘performance’ and ‘the reality’ has been unveiled).

What is of particular interest (to me) is that Miller puts forth a critique of explication’s distribution of the sensible, putting a contemporary twist on Jacotot’s 19<sup>th</sup> Century arguments. And this twist has resonances with recent strains of disability theory - theory which focuses on how disabilities are *situationally* constructed and *dramatically* acted out in school environments. First, I’d like to examine how Miller and Jacotot loosely reflect each other’s unique positions; then below, I’d like to look at how they arrive at very different ‘emancipatory’ alternatives, at different modes of distance in relation to the question of imitation, role-play, and performance.

### **The Anatomy of Ignorance: Locating ‘Mary’ & ‘the Foot’**

Miller argues that our technologies for knowing individuals in schools are ‘intimately involved’ - in a very ‘personal’ way - in identifying the subject positions and

associated lacks of learners. The practices of knowing ignorance (Jacotot's words) operate, in Miller's view, by 'anatomizing' learning subjects - 'subject' being, as Miller reminds us, an old term for *cadaver* - and by turning individuals into a representable class, a table of classifiable social 'objects'. A lot less 'fun' than storying Emile, these modern forms of tabulating seek to scientifically understand the personal-sociological conditions of students as causal factors for both explaining and caring for root difference and inequalities exhibited by bodies. Building her argument out of historical-policy documents, this caring 'familiarity' is based on an intimate 'excursion into [a student's] life [which in turn] leads...to the study of [that student's] community' (Miller, 1995, p. 159). As a result of these scientific excursions, class-coded pedagogies are adjusted to the differentiated needs of classified bodies in the service of a future democracy. In the literature Miller examines, this logistics charts out a real-life Mary's needs - based first on the cultural/economic deficits she 'inherits' from a 'mother who slaves all day' (p. 158). At the same time, Mary, as a *particular* body, is also configured as an abstract figure which, as such, metonymically stands (within a hierarchy of school representations) for a wider populace: she stands for one part of the social body to be addressed by the schooling institution (on the way to the ideal of social equality).

If the educational system, *in loco parentis*, 'gets personal' with students like Mary - that is, names their anatomical irregularities, their social ethos/place, and their cultural insufficiencies - this classificatory project, even as a 'heartfelt' undertaking meant to stand in for the 'slaving mother', nevertheless transforms a learning 'subject' into a cadaverous 'object...of pedagogical surveillance [which is conducted] as a mode of conversation, "involvement", and condescension' (Miller, 1995, p. 159). In a word, the

anatomization of lack is identical with *distribution*. In turn, knowing ignorance enacts explication's own role relations. Here, since Mary is not in a position to inherit from her mother, suitable curricula are adapted to conform to, and reduce-by-gradualism, her specific disabilities (deficits associated with the slaving 'part' of the social body). At the same time, what's superfluous to her 'needs' (in this case, Latin) is detached from Mary's curriculum. In short, anything useless or gratuitous is removed from her horizon of possible sense-perception, sense-making, involvement, or action.

Thus, in order to 'direct the great wave of democracy, [the school/teacher] must follow Mary to her mother's home' (p. 158). At home in the home of the other, the teacher, confronting a freshly anatomized Mary, throws 'Latin' out the window in order to 'give her pupil lessons of a more "useful" sort' (p. 158). And with that, the egalitarian supposition of *universal teaching* - that the 'fabrication of clouds' and the 'fabrication of locks' requires the same intelligence, the same ways of doing - is substituted for another point of departure, that is, *universal education*: the coordinate division of the social body into thinking and slaving parts where, by communicating lessons of a 'useful sort', Mary can be made to make progress toward the 'social majority'. The self-evident inequality of aptitudes and needs, combined with the self-evident task of the schooling system to address these 'differences', in turn means incessantly (re)constructing the difference/division and then (re)playing out what is presupposed: inequality.

In this project, social 'good' arguably fuels the fire of inequality. As Miller argues, this orientation to knowing Mary is both 'heartfelt' and 'guilty' precisely because it expresses the founding 'trauma' of modern/progressive democratic pedagogy - the 'knowledge that we have "children" who will never inherit' (p. 160). With the fact of



‘social minority’ now in place, the great wave of democracy may be technically and teleologically managed so as to bring the trailing waters of the disinherited into the collective fold of a more equal social future: a democracy to come. Arguably, social good and social ‘contempt’ (Jacotot) - or ‘heartfelt guilt’ and class/room ‘condescension’ (Miller) - are elements that, in the progressive logic, need one another, are mutually-constitutive of what Jacotot calls the ‘passions’ of inequality.

In relation to ‘the poor’, Rancière likewise argues, here, that inegalitarian logic - its asymmetrical distributions of ‘parts’ and ‘places’ and what’s ‘useful’ to each - is, in the first instance, nourished by a repentance over the very incompleteness of the social mission - or, as Habermas puts it, that commitment to ‘modernity’s unfinished project’. Inegalitarian distribution is nourished by incessant mourning for an absent democracy, an unfinished ideal - ‘social equality’ - that is continuously pushed over the horizon of the future. Social explication is indefinitely motored up by the ‘good’ social desire to reconcile - in *loco parentis* - the afflicted minority by means of progressivist logic that (re)names and (re)vitalizes precisely that which it aims to cure.

Certain strains of disability theory have figured out explication’s self-perpetuating tautology. In these views of ‘special education’, equality and inequality, health and affliction, are not solid-state properties that subsist outside the discourses and methods that observe or verify them. Rather, equality or inequality, ability or disability, are methodological coefficients of what’s expected, of what’s verified, and of what names and premises are acted upon (as points of departure). In *Disability and Democracy* (1995), Skrtic argues that the ‘expert’ knowledge of disabilities (i.e. ‘conditions’ of incapacity, difference, slowness) and the method of ‘the cure’ may work hand and hand

to manifest learning disabilities, setting into play remediating procedures where, after all is said and done, 'more care means poorer health' (p. 190). Similarly, Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls analyze, in *Handicapping the Handicapped* (1986), the numerous personological and classificatory practices that name disabilities in schools, and that crystallize identifications which have the less than ameliorating result of 'constructing' identities defined by lack and need.<sup>11</sup>

The crucial point that all of these authors put forth is that 'student identities', as well as 'student disabilities', rather than pre-existing in some solid-state, really-existing out there, are instead 'situationally...constructed by the institutional practices of the school' (Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986, p. 159). What these authors argue is that a classification that names a handicap is, in the first instance, a fundamentally non-essential thing. Inequality is integral to the educational 'apparatus' itself, in this view, and may not exist outside of the representational systems that fix the inequality or disability as a 'stable' condition to redress.

Though not strictly speaking an illusion (since classifications are *acted upon* and, therefore, *engender real, material effects*), these designations of disability and inequality are arguably fictional to the extent that they 'do not exist apart from the institutional practices and cultural meaning system that generate and nurture them' (p. 164). If the practices and routines of the schooling apparatus name, nurture, and distribute the 'places' of handicap, then these self-evident 'deficits' 1) do not exist objectively outside

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<sup>11</sup> For Bakhtin (1984), to be named in this way - to be caught within 'the framework of *other people's* words' - is likened to being 'deadened', 'finalized', made a substance 'upon which firm calculations can be made' (p. 59). One is predetermined by one's generic name or image (p. 102) and one's 'indeterminacy and indefiniteness' is thus 'degraded'; so analyzed 'from above', one is sentenced to 'coincide' with oneself within the definition that's assigned by the definer or 'psychologist' (pp. 59-61).

of the expert practices of knowing that render them intelligible and 2) can, structurally-speaking, be (re)named and reduced (ad infinitum) by the experts who increasingly perfect the technical knowledge of lack.

As Skrtic (1995) continues the argument, socially-responsible ‘representations of social reality’ (as well as of disability statuses) may not only be ‘innacurate’, that is, ‘not true in any foundational sense’, but may also provide a cure that itself enacts inequality effects (p. 91). As for these representations of handicap being relational and contingent, Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls point to instances where a school-assigned inequality simply vanishes once the ‘disabled’ person is outside of school. Rather than subsisting as properties of the individuals, inequality is, then, ‘a property of situations’, an ‘interactional’ assignation/assignment that to some extent exfoliates out of the progressive schooling apparatus (Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls, 1986, p. 20; p.175). In Miller’s case, inequality exfoliates out of the increasingly personological knowledge of Mary’s home situation, the domestic horizons of her immediate necessity/social needs. In any case, what is stressed by all of these authors is the ‘fine-grained’ and ‘minute details’ of ‘face-to-face encounters’ in which these situational dramas (and their attendant hierarchies of representation) are composed.

As Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls (1986) punctuate this, ‘if children are handicapped only in school, then it is possible to say that the school itself creates or generates handicaps’ (p. 161). This conclusion reflects Jacotot’s view when he argues that the ‘fiction of inequality... brings its own consequences’ (IS, 81). As a framing supposition, or as a primary ‘explanatory corporation’ (IS, 89), bodies are incorporated into a social mapping, an order of things, where inequality is explained foundationally.

Methodologically speaking, the ‘fiction’ gets enacted into ‘ontology’ (IS, 132). Or as de Certeau (1988) argues, the practices of naming may ‘adopt’ bodies to institutional places, named roles, or social practices (pp. 91-92). One may thus come to believe an imposed classification by performatively ‘incarnating’ the ‘proper name’ or identification that’s been given or assigned by the agent who knows (or by envoy of the institution who, magically imbued with its authority, is ‘presumed to know’) (p. 91).

As Skrtic argues in educational contexts, a diagnosis (or an assignment) of disability does not correspond with an ontologically-given ‘pathology’ (despite the legitimating authority of the medical modeling or scientific discourse that would have us entrust our belief). On the contrary, inequalities in schools are circumstantial to situations and formatting discourses in exactly the same way that the pedagogical fiction is tautologically self-instantiating. If the pedagogical fiction names ignorance and distributes learners to place (within an orderly playing field of subordinate ranks and dependent role-relations), then the sciences of disability map out and incorporate bodies in similar ways. Distribution is enacted through forms of sorting, tabulating, and demographic ‘naming’ - and in the name of social welfare, public health, or the progressive ‘inclusion’ of those who have been classified as deviant or deviating.

In what amounts to a *clinical* definition of explication, Skrtic argues that once a disability - an ‘objective and useful’ representation of a ‘pathological condition’ - has been assigned, a ‘coordinated system of services’ is staged in relation to the known setback, and is so staged that ‘progress...[is understood] as a rational-technical process of incremental improvement’ (p. 210). The expert discourse starts by ‘constituting the incapable’ where the ‘measure of inability’ is reflexively converted into ‘art of distance’

to reduce (IS, 6). Subsequently, the distance to cure is conceived as an incrementalized limit-horizon of the seeable, the doable, the possible, and - closing the loop - the evaluable. While the learner will certainly improve - that is, make evaluable progress - the learner will be identical - that is, self-coincident - with what the 'delivery system' dictates and formats: the closed-circuit of what's useful, predictable, or recognizable as a manifestation of 'progress' or 'good health'. In a solid sense, learners become identical with the sequence of simple-to-complex interventions as kibbleized out by the 'service provider' (or, as Jacotot puts it, they are 'elevated to as high a level as [the student's putative] social destination demand[s]' (IS, 3)). As explication - or as special education - there is (for the learner) no otherwise to the mediated grammar of interventions, pedagogical itineraries, and likely destinations. The delivery system as such defines a *politics* of sensible experiences, doable performances, and evaluable measures that confine the learner to the delivery system and its own measure of educational improvement.

The social/scientific discourses articulated by 'technical experts' not only lock down these starting assignations (the name of the 'pathological condition'), but also 'perfect the representation of the usefulness' of the method of progress (IS, 122). As Rancière states, explicators represent the efficacy/value of explication, which in turn means demonstrating to all the accountability - and measurable improvements - of the school (the *success* of which may not have all that much to do with the *success* of learners).

As a microcosm of explication's 'art of teaching', it's possible to say, inversely, that even so-called normal schooling operates in the mode of special education. Or one

step further, it's possible to say that this special education logic drives an entire ensemble of progressive social institutions: in short, the clockwork special-educationalization of the social body overseen, *in loco parentis*, by the 'epistemocrats' of lack, the forward-looking brains of the global operation. Here, the ideal of the school as a vehicle for producing so-called lifelong learners is converted into an ensemble of practices that risks producing enduring forms of pedagogization, or lifelong infantilization (IS, 133).

As for the situational and interactive role-play of the teacher, Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls (1986) emphasize that, 'as routine and repetitive as the work may be, its character should not overshadow the drama of its importance,' for student's 'identities' and 'careers' are 'assembled from such practices' (p. 159), from practices of knowing and classifying which 'mediate' [the relationship ] between people's background characteristics, their educational achievement, and the statuses they attain' (p. 28). Here, the authors remind us that even the most subtle interactions subtending these 'dramas of representation' may have the most far-reaching effects, precisely when an incidental event is met by a professional gaze, is worded into classification and - once 'detached from its original context' - this classification 'takes on a life of its own' (p. 160).

Insofar as a classification is 'understood' a response to something empirical, it is decided not only based on so-called objective school data, but is also informed by the perceptions of the expert classifier: the discriminating knower who 'knows' and whose 'knowledge of ignorance' emerges through ongoing interactions with personological features like gender, appearance, skin color, behavior, dress, neatness, style of speech (genre), or cultural 'co-membership' (Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls, 1986, p. 17, p. 27). Here, workaday perceptions of learners are caught up in generic forms of recognition, in

pre-given hierarchies of representation. And while these scholastic dramas (vectors for identifying ‘persons’ and connecting them to ‘places’) don’t have a whole lot to do with the intelligence of the learner, these ‘identifications’ are mapped over classroom/learning spaces where everyday games of aptitude, intelligence, expectation, and evaluation are played out.

Beyond monolithic tracking systems, these more subtle distributive dramas construct (and re/continue) a parallel ‘distribution of the sensible’ - an inegalitarian politics of sensible or doable experiences - that sets into play different teacherly performances, different perceptible materials (curricula) and forms of engagement with those materials, and thoroughly dissimilar horizons of expectation for differently-identified class(room) bodies.



The school is housed in the first two floors of an aged convent. The structure is well over one hundred years old. The roof of the bell tower is painted with leaf of gold.



WHAT DAT NOISE?



Mathias' eloquence was matched only by her galloping senility and zeal for punishment.

As Christmas approached it was rumored that the corridors of the upper floors of Infinite Heights began to echo with the cries of the infant Jesus, especially late at night.



When Mathias wasn't looking, my friend Timmy Berry and I would crouch behind our desks and make unspeakable body noises.

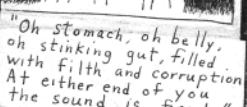
Without exception, Mathias would blame young Dean Weber. Dean was a very lovely boy, although his forehead was too large. Dean had a speech impediment which interfered with his pronunciation of the consonant "R". Consequently, he announced himself as "Dean Webaahk" every morning during roll call. The other children laughed.



Dean was our scapegoat...



This gruesome routine went on with cruel regularity...



"Oh stomach, oh belly, oh stinking gut, filled with filth and corruption. At either end of you the sound is foul."



One day after school, while waiting on the bus to go home, I saw Mathias beckon me from the shadow of an arch...



As I approached Mathias, I thought of the Cupola in the chapel. Within the cupola was painted a single eye.



Did the eye hold me in its gaze? Was this the time of my judgement? Would there be justice for Dean Weber?



Mathias reached into her opposing sleeve



... and pulled out a bag of chips. She gave them to me and said that I was her favorite student.



I knew it - the eye was blind. I ate the chips on the way home. It had been a long day and I was hungry. They tasted good.



Figure 12. *Infinite Justice*, James Cicatko (2001) Ink & Photocopies on Paper

These scenes of ‘involvement’, ‘condescension’, and, as it were, ‘justice’, add yet another layer of violence to Miller’s concerns about getting personal with learner’s anatomy. To recall Miller’s starting point, what does it mean to address the class, particularly when the teacher is fortified with the knowledge of the learning other? And what practical effects or sets of actions might this knowledge put into play? For one, in terms of disability theory, it may mean that distinct modes of address find in/capable bodies precisely where the (knowing) pedagogical agent expects to find them, where pre-given hierarchies of representation have filmstripped unequal bodies onto the stage/scene.

At this point, however, one might object that when a learner shows up in school not being able to read, this ‘without’ defines an objective, empirically-testable deprivation that is neither personologically-constructed nor even all that fictitious. As for the form of knowledge that is first visible in schools - the form that is recognized, that ‘counts the most’, or is indicative of a condition - the in/capacity to display certain verbal skills upon entry into the system becomes a kind of crucible-crucifix that generates ‘organizational and pedagogical consequences’ (Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls, 1986, p. 19), that to say: class distributions. Though not necessarily reflective of intellectual aptitude or creative capacity, these diagnostic assessments/assignments starts the various service dominos tumbling - ‘sets of actions’ upon a learner’s horizon of possible actions, perceptions, playing, making, or doing. With that, hierarchally-constructed groups and altered states of address - an altered politics of experience - are set into play, even if only to mitigate ‘embarrassing situations’ (Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls, 1986, p. 20) (...which

reminds me of a story). When I asked my own second-grade teacher why I wasn't in the higher reading group of my friend, P., she soothed me - no joke - with the consolation that 'some people are good at reading while others are good at kickball'. As for getting anatomical, what she explained to K. was that P. was the brains of the operation while K. was, as it were, the manually-kicking foot of the social body.

Against this comedy of 'places', and against the sciences that would explain and perfect this comedy, what these disability theorists suggest is that when it comes to naming a dis/ability, an identification can't simply be causally linked to 'the inherited characteristics of lower-class students...or their cultural environments'; rather, they are enacted through 'organizational...and policy pressures', the institutional explications, which determine 1) 'what counts' early on as a legitimate expression of knowledge or technical know-how and 2) whether this *recognizable* 'skill [has been obtained] by a certain date, and in a certain form' (Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls, 1986, p. 19). The 'equality' of a singular form (or genre) of 'benchmark' intelligence meets up, here, with a time-variable  $x$  so as to define the explicative *difference* between bodies, a difference (or name) that is, from that point forward, continuously redressed. Or as Rancière puts it, 'at the heart of the pedagogical fiction is the representation of inequality as a *retard* in one's development' (IS, 119).

Through these *double-inaugural* verdicts, stagism and gradualism meet up to brand into a tardy learner exactly that kind of taxonomy of insufficiency that might take a life of its own. The knowledge of ignorance - of who and where a learner is, of what they can or cannot do, and of how they fit into the schema of recognizable (school) skills and learning velocities - presents more than just the warp-and-woof of remedial actions for

the sluggish reader in want of catching up. For the want of a nail, it communicates the measure of inability, swapping out a *want* (as desire, curiosity, eagerness: a passion to see more or to do more) for a *want* (as 'lack', what's missing: the imposed 'need' that signifies the catch-up interval to an arbitrary gold-standard of linguistic-discursive proficiency).

The art of inequality pivots on assigning 'different places for beings that aren't different' (IS, 89). The art of inequality pivots, then, on distribution, but also on the 'stories' (the science-fictions) that legitimate distribution: the 'representation of the usefulness' (IS, 122) of those methods that would bring difference/distribution into down-lined global re-equilibrium. 'Such is the logic that puts things in their place, that of the "reduction" of inequalities...Public Instruction, the instituted social fiction of inequality as *lateness*, is the magician that will reconcile...the sovereign people with the retarded people...It will do so by infinitely extending the field of its explications and the examinations that control them' (p. 132). Stationed between the distant *ideal* of 'the people' and the poignant facticity of 'the retarded' - that is to say, stationed between the 'brains' and the 'foot', and with the aim of progressively reconciling the self-evident gap between these two unequal parts - the labors of remediation 1) endlessly legitimate the place, rank, and authority of thinking remediators while 2) instantiating, for tardy learners, forms of engagement that isolate (often by age six, no less) those who get to tell a story and do art from those who play catch-up, those students who get 'less-determined learning environments' (i.e., 'creativity' and 'own-pace' movement) from those who get amplified 'structure' and increased 'supervision in conformance to organizational demands' (Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls, 1986, p.10).

Bracketing whatever so-called self-esteem issues that come from telling someone they are a foot, the more vital point is that certain persons get to do, perform, compose, or seriously play while others do not. Certain people get the ‘less-determined environment’ while others are bird-fed pellets of what’s ‘useful’ in order to close a gap, a telescoping Zeno’s paradox that has, formally speaking, no conciliatory zero-point.

If Foucault (1995) explores how populations are known, sorted, or pathologized in the name of social welfare or public health, Rancière explores how the logic of progress makes inequality a self-evident starting point for eradicating inequality, for abolishing the distance between the social *ideal* of ‘the people’ and the unacceptable image of some foot, ‘chained or unchained, whose existence undermines or contradicts the attainment’ of that social ideal (D, 81).

Besides enacting (perhaps) a project of narcissistic self-loathing on global-political scale, what Rancière calls the conciliatory ‘grief-work’ of progressive deliverance implies, on a more concrete level, the renunciation of the ‘intellectual adventure of equality’ of anyone (IS, 134): the postponement of an equal capacity to seriously do, think, story, imitate, play, or take part (perform) in common as an equal. Instead of serious adventure or serious play (where learners might impersonate a ‘real’ talent, or come to perceive themselves *in* agency), the learner gets the potter’s wheel: the achromatic workshop of proximal advances and successive approximations.

As Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls (1986) sum things up, the status of being the retarded foot of the social body is due less to an individual’s ‘lack of skills and abilities than to the way in which schooling is organized for students with different rates of

learning' (p. 20). Again, if *lack* isn't the problem, this 'shifts the focus' to 'competencies as the properties of situations' (p. 20), where a *set-back* is the function of the educational *mise en scene*, a function of the very staging which names and (re)mediates a 'handicap' or comparative 'deviancy' (p. 161). As for those provident pedagogies that would adapt themselves to scenes of the set back or, in Jacotot's idiom, explicate 'at the level of the people's intelligence' (IS, 99), 'accommodating' a perceived inequality, while seemingly 'sensible...in the short run [...is] regressive in the long run': the net effect of these adaptations to supposed place or level is more and more inequality - 'stratification processes' - where lack is embodied by the learner as 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls, 1986, p. 19, 171). The fictions of inequality (and their associated distributions) are methodologically embodied, inhabited, performed unto 'ontology': stultification.

What passes here for special education logic is continuous, in Rancière's view, with the more general 'epistemocratic' logic bent on addressing forms of social inequality. For Rancière (and one might add, for Illich) explication's 'school' logic is variously recapitulated at all levels of social, political, and academic orders as the expedient 'common sense' of social improvement - the seemingly most sensible means for instructing the 'great wave' of democracy, for steadily reeling the social minority into the inclusive fold of the social majority - the ideal to be achieved. As Rancière remarks, 'progress is the pedagogical fiction built into the fiction of society as a whole' (IS, 119).

Moreover, whoever targets social (re)equilibrium ensconced in the knowledge of inequality can only reinstate the hierarchy, or extend the intellectual oligarchy (IS, 133).

What Rancière calls the ‘integral pedagogization of society’ is, then, the work-a-day ‘infantilization’ - the tactical short-bussing - of political society as a whole.

### **Explaining Assignments: Counter-Cinema & Shock Treatment**

[At Buchenwald] I worked...on experimentally-induced insanity...Liberal SS circles felt it would be more humane [than murder]. So [we went] on our subjects with metronomes, serpents, surgical removal of certain glands, magic-lantern hallucinations, new drugs, threats recited over hidden loudspeakers, hypnotism, clocks that ran backwards, and...Brechtian vignettes at midnight - *Dr. Hilarious, The Crying of Lot 49*

On one hand, this detour into disability theory is meant to explore the capillary levels of Miller’s discussion about personological and anatomizing modes of explicative knowing. At the same time, what’s capillary, here, reflects a more global, social logic that is, for Rancière, no less a ‘creation of the imagination’ (IS, 81). Whatever the case, in capillary expression or in large-scale social forms, the knowledge of ignorance, rather than an offering coherent/stable representation of inequality, instead vitalizes inequality (differences between social parts) in order to reconcile the distance that its own distributional logic had procedurally engendered.

For Miller (1995), the ‘condescending’ project of ‘regulatory taxonomy’ at the heart of modern schooling systems is ‘self-infantilizing’ (p.158). What I’d like to add, here, is that in order to explicate, and in order to assume (epistemic) ranks, one has to, at some level, infantilize oneself as well. Scholastic explication, I’d argue, is also a form of practiced *self-mutilation*, where the act of infantilizing and the act of being infantilized are merged together, then, into a single act, into the single, blundering comedy of mutually-assured infantilization.

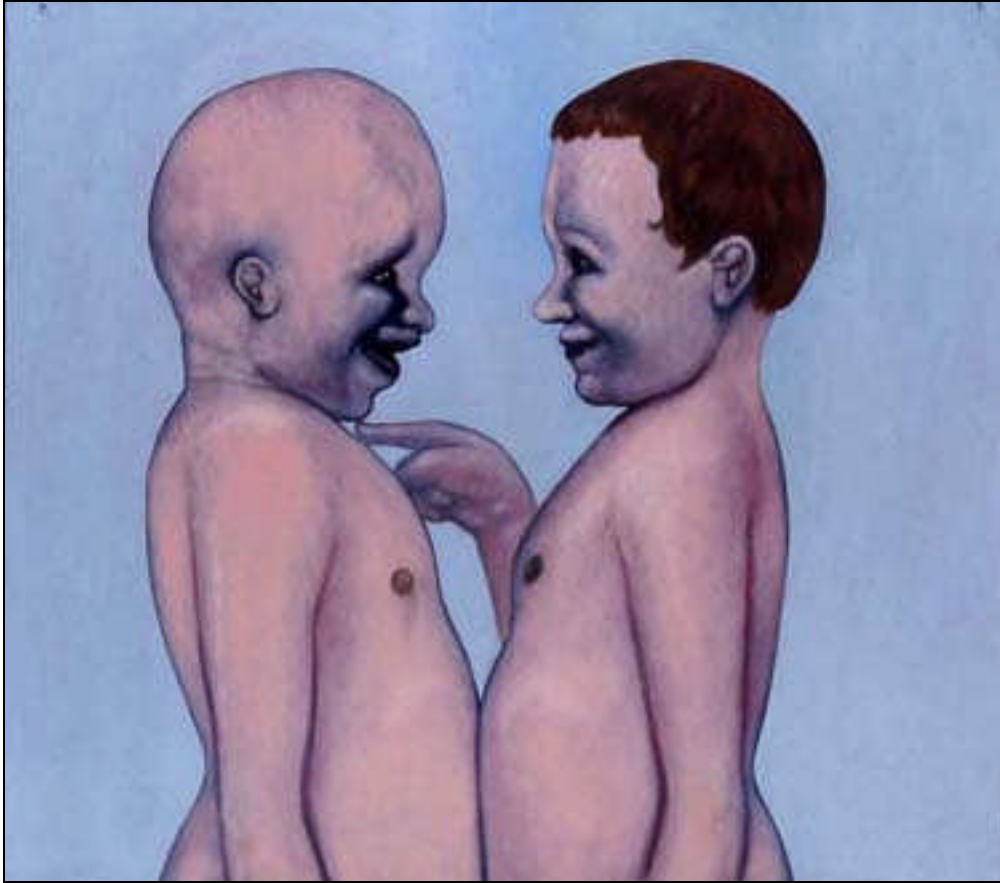


Figure 13. *Coochee-Coo*, James Ciatko (2004) Oil on Paper

In a sense, Miller wants out of that ‘act’, that ungainly pedagogical embrace, arguing that we can’t explicate a liberated ‘agency’ without remaining implicated (and implicating others) in those same dyadic/hierarchal structures (of difference and/or deliverance). To explicate ‘agency’ means renewing the same epistemic ranks and roles, the same ‘artful interactions’ (p. 162) that, for Jacotot, ‘smell of the bridle’. Politically speaking, for Miller the ‘separation and identification of “teacher” and “student”’, like minutely described interactions between them, sustain images of a depoliticized interiority that we identify as our “normal” or “basic” lives’ (p. 161). Yet more than simply ‘sustain images’, one might argue that they sustain the inhabited performances -

the living, breathing, and doing - of a 'depoliticized interiority' (i.e., the taking of roles that situationally *embody* the *practices* of mastery and subordination).

Miller's own answer to the pedagogical fiction is to dispel 'misrecognition' by unveiling how the educational apparatus itself functions as it moves through its staging acts. As Miller proposes the counter-cinematic solution, 'we cannot explain agency to students in ways that empower their political difference from us so long as we misrecognize them, and ourselves, as innocently implicated in what are actually artful interactions...the alternative to such misrecognition, of course, is to reimagine ourselves as the *managers of the vernacular*, at all its levels, that we are *assigned* to be, and to *reveal* and *explain* this *assignment* to students' (p. 162, emphasis added).

Insofar as Miller argues that the 'teacher' (as such) cannot critically explicate agency and/or emancipate in the mode of Freirean 'deliverance', her arguments echo those of Jacotot, Rancière, Ellsworth, and Lather. Yet, as Miller continues the counter-cinematic argument, the 'alternative' means that teachers need to twist 'the gaze' of the apparatus back upon everyday forms of schooling itself in order to reveal (to learner-spectators) the system's deformative role-calls. The point is to disclose what's theatrical, and to reveal the distance/difference between the artifices of this 'specific fiction' (p. 160) and, on the other side of its 'illusionism', to display the more real and 'relational' experience of unknowable individuals in all their vivid authenticity.

As Miller clarifies, this means defining a new *distance*: the 'important *difference* between the real situation and desires of students' and the institutionally 'idealized "people like us" whom we imagine them to be. [And this marks the distance] between the



inaccessible student body that can recognize its difference from the pedagogical moral technology that was designed to contain it' (Miller, 1995, p. 162). In a word, teachers have to demonstrate that the institution, the everyday naturalness of its 'containment technologies', is a stultifying theater quite distinct from our real bodies or selves.

This means bringing what is pedagogically *implicit* out into the authentic light of a 'relational' daytime, where a more authentic form of community becomes visible. This is, in a sense, the solution of Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls (1986) when they *conclude* that the 'social situation' in schools, its 'face-to-face encounters...must be made the object of investigation' (p. 176). As usual, the solution is: more scholarly investigating, more 'showing what's really going on', *sub rosa*. Or as Miller targets the *mise-en-scene*, this solution means making *explicit* the pedagogical 'vernacular', the 'artful interactions', and the modes of (class) role-play that are transacted and reiterated by all these lame (and laming) institutionalized 'personae'. That said, for Miller, this 'revealing and explaining of assignments' to students need not be as 'tedious', as 'embedded', or as 'male-coded' as 'Marxism' (p. 162).

The kind of tedium Miller is referring to, I'm guessing, is something along the lines of an 'embedded' Brechtian teacher-as-producer, the teacher who arrests the ritual in order to break its theatrical spell. That said, Brecht's counter-theater and Miller's assignment-explaining dramaturgy are, at least in principle, structurally parallel in that they share the same basic aim to estrange practitioners from the role-play and reassert a refreshed command over what's really going on. As Benjamin (1967) describes Brecht's aesthetic logic, traditional theater (the theater that Brecht opposed) functioned by 'possessing' its 'spectators' through normative aesthetic forms/artifices - representational

conventions that ‘staged plots’, ‘reproduced illusions’, and provided satisfying ‘resolutions’ for passive spectators who, as such, uncritically ‘identified’ with what the dramaturge was presenting on the stage (the classical illusion). The purpose of critical distance, then, was to reveal the representation *as* a representation, and to display the staging as a system/apparatus that stitched spectators into the illusion(ism). To the extent that traditional theater ‘possessed’ its audience with fables, verisimilar actions, and order-restoring resolutions, Brecht offered an exorcist’s distance - or in his case, a ‘head-workers’ distance - from the illusionism. In principle, this aesthetic jolt could then be generalized, as it were, to the narratives and practices of everyday (ideological) life.

As for the ‘tedium’, here, critical cinema (theory) based on the self-reflexive paradigm often starts with the sentiment that spectators are, first and foremost, passive ‘victims’ and, as such, are predisposed to uncritically embracing, or being engulfed by, the system of illusion-*slash*-ideology (Shaviro, 1993). As Hayward (2000) summarizes Brecht’s counter-theater, ‘by denormalizing theatre, by *showing* its artifice (staging and acting), he wanted to politicize his audience into thinking that society itself could be denormalized and therefore changed’ (p. 89). And as Benjamin (1967) continues, by referring to - and thereby unsettling - theatrical conventions (for example, by means of an actor’s direct-address to the audience, or by way of montage where a ‘superimposed element disrupts the context in which it is inserted’ (p. 234)) - the critical dramaturge could break the seamless continuities of theatrical sequences and, by way of these estrangement effects, shock folks out of their ordinary, everyday perceptual complacency

(that is, to jolt them out of their state of misrecognition and emancipate them from the rituals they're their sutured within).<sup>12</sup>

Against the 'illusionism' and its 'possession' of the theatrical 'user', Benjamin argued that 'the public' could be 'enduringly alienated, through thinking, from the conditions in which it lives' (p. 236). Benjamin puts a kind of positive spin on the shock-paradigm when he argues that, in Brecht's epic theater, it is the 'art of thinking in other people's heads that is decisive' (p. 227).<sup>13</sup>

Though Miller avoids the Marxism, her goal to 'explain the assignments' still rests on a similar consciousness paradigm, a similar headspacing. Showing the falseness of the roles still depends, then, on a stage-taking agent, even if the 'epic dais' is now occupied by a teacher who wants to both discard the 'role' and submit its 'disciplinarity' to a communitarian whipping. As for Miller's more subtle alternative then, one could make the pedagogical fiction - and the whole theater of explication - into a distantiated object of apparatus critique for students. The point is, after all, to separate oneself (and others) from the pretense, to distinguish the role from the reality. And this means

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<sup>12</sup> In a sense, one could say that the 'good' *alienation* (shock, dialectical montage, *etc.*) is deployed to contradict the spectator's 'bad' *alienation* (passive acceptance of, or investment in, the illusion) in order to presage a future, ideal state of *reconciliation* (that is, non-alienation, non-contradiction, and social re-equilibrium *sans* mystifying illusions or alienating, mediational systems).

<sup>13</sup> Contrast this statement with Benjamin's own view of learning and 'child's play', which is valorized for *not* being 'in the head' (Buck Morss, 1991, pp. 262-265). Sharing Piaget's theory of cognitive development as starting point, Benjamin is concerned less in the conceptual-rational evolution of cognitive stages than with what's 'lost along the way' (p. 263). What Benjamin is interested in, then, are forms of 'mimetic' and 'creative spontaneity' which he sees characterizing the learning experiences of children when they were involved in things, when the play drive, as it were, had not been neutralized by so-called higher levels of formal-abstract operations. As Buck-Morss states, what Benjamin focused on was how 'children got to know objects by laying hold of them and using them creatively, *releasing from them new possibilities of meaning*' (p. 264, emphasis mine). What institutional education 'repressed was this activity: Parroting back the "correct" answer, looking without touching, solving problems "in the head"...learning to do without optical cues - these acquired behaviors went against the child's grain [in Benjamin's view]. The triumph of cognition in adults...signaled their defeat as revolutionary subjects' (p. 265).

leveraging enough objective distance so as to arrest - and bust up - the misrecognition (of the 'naturalness' of the school machine) with an estrangement effect, and to step outside of the 'assignments' that would otherwise engulf teachers and students alike in the hegemony.

Personally, for me, this would be a total blast - an anti-role role, or anti-art art - that I could really sink my teeth into. But that personal sense of a good time, as I've learned, could be indicative of a pedagogical problem. As with counter-cinematic theory, the Brechtian counter-explication is indefinitely teacher-centered in that it wants to expose what's missing, wants to get people to *see* and *understand* that they are non-identical to the 'moral-technological containment' field and its dramatico-pedagogical forms. And like counter-cinematic strategies, Miller's alternative aims to break the 'fourth wall' of the school by 'talking directly' to the learner in order to force into view the 'real' desires and 'relational' experiences of bodies who have stopped impersonating. After all, the point is to close to gap toward more authentic (less alienated) learning spaces peopled by individuals who are no longer objects of class knowledge or anatomical calculation.

Paradigmatically, the counter-cinematic method 'makes visible *and* questions' its own 'meaning production practices', the technologies it uses to mediate (learning), and exposes the 'conventions' of the roles, sequences and ends. And like counter-cinema, it 'makes visible and questions' the symbolic materials it deploys, its power to curricularize and represent - while also troubling the hierarchal roles that practitioner are compelled to inhabit. Critically displaying both 'what it represents and *how* it represents', this self-

referential aesthetic logic turns ‘the gaze into a critical weapon’ by turning the gaze ‘against itself’ (Hayward, 2000, p. 237).

Again, what a blast for people like me. But in terms of pedagogical practice, this anti-role role arguably smolders with a kind of repentant pedagogocentricism that can’t ‘get over itself’. And like the cinematic eye that’s been weaponized (masochistically) ‘against itself’ - the *still*-guilty teacher remains front-and-center, still implicated in whatever attitudes of critical detachment or disavowal. Shaviro (1993) is on the *educational* mark, I think, when he suggests that counter-cinematic film theorists, just ‘like Sade’s libertines sitting around the banquet table, find themselves constructing the most elegant, rigorous, and even lucidly self-interrogating discourses only to ground their most singular pleasures, their most gratuitous obsessions’ (p. 10). Thus, the distancing method that works against itself still detaches (and narcissistically) secures the teacher’s position at the obsessive ‘itself’ center of the classroom dramaturgy, even if the intention is to now disown the assignment and renounce the ‘privileged position’ that ‘the teacher’ has been ‘culturally-hailed to’ occupy (Miller, 1995, p. 159). Now, with this self-referential move, the guilt of the democratic system that dreams of ‘raising’ Mary (because Mary won’t inherit) is continued forward - precisely in the anxious guilt of the pedagogue who wants to shed his/her pedagogical skin and submit the false appearance/mask to a withering demystification.

I can’t help but notice that Miller’s analysis, here, as well as its guilty mode of abjuring the assignment, resonates with my own teacherly experiences abroad. As an ‘American’ in my own state of *hey-that’s-not-me* cultural disavowal, I wanted to both disidentify with an identity - an albatross around my neck - while setting into play

various pedagogies that might turn that ‘weaponized gaze’ against the media apparatuses that I, in principle, was associated with (and to varying degrees ‘felt guilty’ about). And since I saw myself as a reluctant extension of *kultura hamburgerowa*, I felt responsible - but also uniquely equipped - to offer a critical antidote to its spectacular menu. To that end, I could help deconstruct (for nascent victims of Western-capitalist interpellation) that high-speed tele-domination machine (and, maybe, even shoot down a few of those satellites pouring into Eastern European skies). Loosely speaking, my rather ‘protective’ (Star Wars) orientation to my own students is prefigured by Peter McLaren (1995), particularly when he regards students as similarly ill-equipped to cope with the intensities of contemporary mediascapes. In anticipation of the cure, he diagnoses the ‘noise’ he overhears from ‘them’ as the sounds of ‘youthful bodies responding to the slow commodification of their will under late capitalism’ (p. 149). Instead of supposing, then, that students might be able to exert some *other* kind of agency/performance (or even have enough uncommodified ‘will’ to somehow explain themselves), he decodes their verbal ‘intoxications’ as a ‘desperate attempt to fill in the empty spaces of their souls’ (p. 149). And since these ‘empty spaces’ have to be contested or filled up with something, and given the self-evidence of an ‘unholy’ state-of-affairs, McLaren endorses those ‘rank-and-file’ teachers capable of ‘concretely mediating’ the ‘vision of hope’ (p. 55).

McLaren - and his communitarian/eschatological tropes - aside, what my students in turn told me, using either words or torsional silences, was that I was not only pretty funny on stage, but that they did not really need my self-referential handwringing, my suspicious eye, or any other distancing tactic that I might concretely mediate to, for, or at them (*vis-à-vis* their own situational everyday, their own ways of naming sensible

experience, or even their own preferred modes of intoxication). What they seemed to be telling me was that a dais-displacing computer screen, an online literary-art journal, or a randomly-generated curriculum (one that nobody knew much about) was a lot more emancipating, a lot more idiosyncratically ‘moving’, than anything that I might interstitially student-center (v.) for their ‘interests’ or ‘agencies’. At *this* point, having lost my footing, there was nothing, then, to critically *oppose* and, above all, the creative or the ludic did not need to be postponed until after all the resistance work or ‘class struggle’ was officially resolved.





Figure 14. *The Castration of Origen*, James Ciatko (1996) Oil on Canvas

To contrast the two *geographies*, back home in the States, the *knowledge* of ‘a Mary’ (as an object) was already a kind of cultural-institutional done-deal, a given aspect of the (anatomic) terrain of the school system, and fundamental to the metonymic order of class/room identities and whatever given ‘co-memberships’ (if not also, then, a basic property of the ‘master’s certification’ itself). As McLaren demonstrates, this phenomenological familiarity with ‘youthful bodies’, the frequency of their speech-events, and the stakes of ‘their’ inexorable struggles, compose a kind of critical given as well.

Alternatively, abroad - self-displaced, pedagogically-homeless - any kind of personal knowledge of ‘a Magda’ was, to use Miller’s wording, straight away ‘inaccessible’. My own educational filmstrip did not convert to the Eastern European Theater and there was no original negative print to which I could refer back. Crucially, my ignorance of a Magda or a Przemek was not some dissembling posture or ironic meta-performance in the service of ‘explaining the assignments’ - it was just a plain fact.

On the other hand, there was perhaps one negative print available. Since my Polish students were (and continued to be) subject to Soviet-style banking education, then whatever enlightened pedagogy I could marshal forth (it follows) would be more fittingly democratic, liberatory, or situationally-vital to critical thinking or political agency than anything resembling that old teacher-centered, fact-based, reality-reifying pedagogical ‘mind-meld’ machine<sup>14</sup>. While my own story is just that, my own, what I saw was that

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<sup>14</sup> The trope is Mr. Spock’s via Massumi (1994).

Soviet banking did not have the seamlessly depository ideological effects that Freire (*et. al.*) attribute to the form. Rather than authoritatively interpellate or bombard learners to order or passive acquiescence, it instead generated - or permitted ordinary persons to generate - if not shifting tactics of *homo indeterminus*, then at the very least the most dynamic arrays of *homo not-that-stupidicus*: thus, those sideways glances, immovable silences, collective shrugs, thrown voices, mobile ploys for cheating the system (i.e., transient solidarities), and seemingly countless other *samizdat* lines of flight.

As Wertsch (1991) suggests, the broadcast model of banking transmission - or any other kind of 'mediated action' - is always open to unintended consequences and irreducible effects, where intentions may not be 'realized' and meanings never exhausted (p. 38). And as Foucault suggests, there is no power relation (practice) that does not operationalize unpredictable counter-moves or involve dynamically mobile games of dissidence, change, and mutation (as well as evoke 'outside' or 'un-sutured' elements not accounted for - forces not anticipated - within a given scene or an intended [pedagogical] relation) (Foucault, 1995, Deleuze, 1986, de Certeau, 1998).

While I'm not endorsing the Voice of any transmission model, what I am suggesting is that the banking archetype might be a kind of straw-man that's been propped up for generations of educational theorists to appropriate as a foil - as a *negative criterion* - for ratifying whatever emancipatory practice that would be, as it were, officially non-banking - including any critico-progressive technology or speech-based 'talking cure' (de Castell, 2004) that would pass for a liberation pedagogy.

The more interesting deduction, however, is that if banking does not work, if its cause does not obtain the compliant banking effect, this would indicate that ordinary learners are not entrapped but are already quite competent, are already abundantly able. (That assumption, as Jacotot-Rancière suggest, is a something that could be ‘tried out’.) Strictly speaking, in contrast to the passivity of the learner ‘possessed’, it’s possible to instead verify - and amplify - a plenitude of extant capacities. By implication, this would indicate that countless *samizdat* moments or involvements - invisible trajectories of incandescent engagement - are always already in *action*, getting done, beyond the constrictive ‘what counts’ radar of schooling institutions (here, there, or anywhere).

As for the term, *samizdat*, I’m not referring to the mimeographed circulation of forbidden political tracts. Just as true to the word, I’m referring to the most common tools or shared media forms that, as such, become affordances of gratuitous fascination, engagement, desire: means of traversing experiential distances - means of crossing filaments of unprogrammed experience and undetermined competency - under one’s own power. Above all, I’m recognizing a *samizdat* encounter not in terms of the instructive content, formal(ist) elements, or so-called ‘quality’ of what is engaged, but the force/quality of *attention* directed by the person to what the person is doing: the improvident self-sufficiency of the learning engagement or performance.

And while not that exhilarating, perhaps, from a theoretical standpoint, I’d like to suggest that my status of being an ignoramus - that is, a pedagogue worthy of being ignored - introduced a kind of an ‘alternative’ that did not require a condition to clarify, a distance to fold, or a guilty role to self-referentially disown from center-stage. While Miller’s alternative takes explication head-on, this method also defines an *anti-role role*

that still requires making practitioners aware of their 'real' condition. At the same time, it maintains the pedagogocentricism in that it takes the artful roles of the institution as a false appearance to be explained - a kind of skin/skein to be unthreaded before the eyes of the class. What's more, the anti-role role assumes that it's *possible* to impassively exteriorize the 'role' one is in, and to detach the professional masks or identities that obscures things as they are, or that divide us from our more 'authentic' selves.

As sweet as this relational authenticity and its 'real desires' may sound, what creeps back into Miller's argument is the notion that one can separate the art from the reality, the true person from the impersonation, the constructed role from unconstructed truth of bodies. What creeps in, then, is the notion that we can locate the unconstructed facticity of the 'real' that would immediately ground our so-called authenticity. While one might certainly want to disavow a lame role from some low-budget horror flick, the *tactics* of disavowal presume, then, that a teacher can mark the *distance*, that is, can untie the 'knots of pretense and reality', or at least know where the 'impersonation' ends (Gallop, 1995, pp. 15-17).

In Gallop's estimation, we can't do that: the knots of 'pretense and reality' - of art and identity, theater and world, appearance and so-called authenticity - can't be unbraided vis-à-vis our (teacherly) identities or our everyday (professional) impersonations. As de Certeau (1988) remarks (with regard to the institution and its symbolic titles and roles), the point is not to explain away a 'corrupt' order of the institution, but perhaps to game it, that is, 'to find in the institution itself both the seriousness of the real, and the mockery of the truth it displays' (p. 99).

The point of the previous chapter was not to decode or explain away roles and identities as mystifying appearances, but to verify how equals might ‘act out’ far-flung talents in actuality, or impersonate competent intellectual or artistic ‘doing’ as a form of role-play, as a constructive, creative - and self-multiplying - performance (minus the security of outcomes). As disability theorists would seem to agree, the soft ordnance of ‘names’ imposes a ‘regime of belief’ (Rancière) that links a proper name to an expected performance. As de Certeau describes this process of incorporation, one’s ‘nerves’ begin to obey the name that is assigned by the other. In turn, names, titles and classifications explicate the place to inhabit or the role one would accept - and en flesh - as one’s own. ‘The name’, as de Certeau remarks, ‘performs’ (p. 92).

Explication, seen in this context, co-ordinates the *name* and the *place* of ignorance and then distributes the unequal or the imperfect to their place (and in subordinate relation to the explicator whose own privilege is circularly reiterated by the institution of the pedagogical fiction). In act, explication gets bodies to thus en-*nerve* their proper name and place, imposing ‘upon [a] subject the duty-to-be...that is the will of the other’ (de Certeau, 1988, p. 93).

As suggested in *The Nights of Labor*, what was emancipating for Rancière’s worker-artists (*etc.*) was not to be at home in one’s class role, or to be at home in one’s authenticity or true desires. This, in fact, was what the Fourierist architects wanted *for them*: to en flesh the *logos* of the Phalanstery where one’s *immediate* and *authentic* desire

could be lawfully synchronized with one's 'natural' social occupation.<sup>15</sup> For Rancière, self-emancipation implied, inversely, the idiosyncratic capacity to *disbelieve*, to reverse the logic of 'explanatory corporation' by playing, as it were, make-believe. And this implied the capacity to leverage *art* and *appearance* against the *necessity* of 'given' roles and situations - to reenact a tomorrow differently - where anyone's creative-artistic capacity might generate 'false notions about real life - or, perhaps, true notions about the falsity of this life' (NL, 52). Whichever way you flip Rancière's phrase, there, the unconstructed authenticity of proper names, identities, or communities isn't there.

Now, as for Miller's anti-artifice, I myself could 'explain the assignments' until the cows come home - and love every minute of it. One might add, finally, that learners might not give a damn about that show either.

On the other hand, by being pedagogically at sea, there was nothing *implicit* that could be made *explicit* - nothing veiled that I might, with any confidence at all, unpack. Arguably, this homeless alternative did not involve a consciousness trajectory at all, since the only thing I was conscious of was that my filmstrip had jumped the rails and my head was stammering forth what increasingly sounded like other people's lines. In a word, the sudden non-knowledge of - and the consequent inaccessibility to - the class or headspace

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<sup>15</sup> Its worth noting, here, that Fourier's writings on political 'desire' (and on the 'little hordes' of children who 'love' to clean the latrines) also inspired Andre Breton's politics of surrealism. For Breton, the dada anti-aesthetic and surrealist (anti) art was seen to disrupt and by-pass 'alienated' and illusory forms of desiccated 'mediation' (i.e., the 'unfortunate expedient' of 'pictures') in order to evoke or, better yet, *enflesh* a lived politics of authentic desire (see Hopkins, 2004). To some extent, Brecht's 'counter-theater' reloads the same 'desire' to critically self-represent 'representation' as ideology or illusionism in order to evoke a good political reality/totally beyond 'false images'. Rancière calls this aesthetico-political ideal 'metapolitics', where the 'social body' achieves a form of 'success' by *immediately* embodying the political 'truth' of things as 'consensus', as a utopia of spontaneous agreement - that is, as pure aesthetico-political presence - stripped of any polemical distance, adversarial vantage point, or aesthetic breathing room for 'dissensus'. One might refer to metapolitics, then, as the ultimate, terminally-compelling 'happy ending'.

of the (learning) Other simply resolved from a de-familiarizing shift in my own terrain, a leap between two non-contiguous points on a map. Whatever the case or cause, this quality of being a really and truly ignorant schoolmaster not only permitted me to finally listen (and maybe on occasion even hear), but also permitted the class to evade (at least now and then) the rituals of mutually-assured infantilization.

To shift from these arts of distance, I'll cite Laclau (1990) when he argues that if there's a point to 'social analysis', it is not to determine who the 'social agents are, but the extent to which they manage to constitute themselves' (p. 250). By the same token, if there is a point to 'pedagogy', what if it were not to determine who, what, or where a student (or even a teacher) 'is', or what a student might be expected to achieve, but the extent to which learners perceive themselves, or become conscious of themselves, *in* agency? And what if it were supposed (all double-inaugural gestures aside) that learners are always already involved in intellectual practices and artistic performances - even if the *forms* or *genres* of their (samizdat) expressions may go unrecognized by schooling systems?

This *what if* (re)orientation takes the notion of student identity and transposes it from the register of identification/representation and into more dramatic key of *acting* where the 'objects' of education are nothing more than the affordances of equality that learners are involved in, the distant 'things-in-common' they engage with.

## **(4) Affordances of Equality: Performance *as* Competence**

### **Performing in the Place of the Other**

Reflecting on his archival studies, Rancière argues that ‘a worker who had never learned how to write and yet tried to compose verses to suit the taste of his times was perhaps more of a danger to the prevailing ideological order than a worker who performed revolutionary songs’ (*NL*, xxix). This latter worker, the ‘resistant’ worker, who comes to learn to sing the same song - a text associated with a class position - fits into, or is grouped into, a social category (an identity) defined by a shared ‘place’, a shared discourse of struggle (that is not, necessarily, a particular worker’s own speech), as well as a common (political) distance. Thus, coming to understand the same song not only defines the intelligibility of the situation one is framed within, but reiterates the aggregate ‘chorus’ of singers: it reiterates the class position the singers occupy, as well as the horizon of possible actions defined by that position/identity.

By contrast, the wayward learners who *imitate* what they ‘can’t do’ perform a capacity in the act. In so doing, the worker-artist who wanders from the space of collective resistance in order to ‘compose’ something in turn breaks from the ‘given’ classification that’s associated with the former social identity, be it a working-class identity, or an identification linked to a particular student body. As argued in Chapter 2, the connection between playing ‘make-believe’ - the (imitative) performance of some far-



flung talent - and an actual competence that is 'for real' is demonstrated in Jacotot's notion of experimenting in the 'gap' between 'accreditation and act'. Anticipating Cazden's (1981) notion of 'performance before competence', the learners who compose poetry before they can 'write' simply *intervene* - out of place - as competent agents. What Jacotot adds to Cazden's formulation, however, is an anarchic element of in-distinction or uncertainty between an appearance and the real thing, between a theatrical performance and the real world. Jacotot's thinks in terms of performance *as* competence. And this 'as' blurs the very distinction between a performative act and an expert competency, between the act of an imitator and the institutionally-consecrated act of an authority.

While Cazden's notion has been explored in terms of educational theory<sup>16</sup>, there is a political dimension to it as well, precisely where Rancière shows, in *The Nights of Labor*, that individuals who perform *as if* they are competent, *as if* they legitimately belong to the same world of sense, action, and intervention as their so-called 'masters', these persons are in fact the 'real' threat to dominant orders, the real threat to hierarchal distributions that rely upon stable names, knowable roles, or identifiable classifications and co-mappable places. Conversely, the workers who re-cite the same 'revolutionary' songs inhabit (and re-site) the relatively stable position of the classed worker or resistant body.

With Lukács the problem will be about incorporating bodies: that is, getting the chorus to come to recite and embody the *right* song. For Lukács, progress means getting the empirical consciousness of 'the people' to conform to their imputed consciousness,

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<sup>16</sup> For example, in terms of learning the very language that a child is always already playing through and performing within - *sans* explicator. As parallel argument is made in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

where the *empirical* consciousness is what a learner-subject feels, thinks, or does, and the *imputed* consciousness is what the student *would* feel or think, if in fact they truly *understood* their ‘actual’ condition. As Buck-Morss (1977) remarks, Lukács’ theory ultimately demands that a certain class of body stay where it ‘is’, in formal identity with itself, in order for the *theory* to work, that is, in order for the organic system to dramatically exfoliate as planned.

While it could be said that Lukács is ancient history, the distribution of the sensible that he explicates is variously continued in the critical tradition. For Lukács and Brecht, just as for Freire and McLaren, the project comes down to harmonizing an empirical consciousness with an ideal or desired form of awareness. Moreover, ethico-critical understanding anticipates the right way of seeing, doing, or speaking. Understanding things comes *before* doing things, knowledge anticipates critical agency, and it is the estranging device - a dialectical image presented at the teachable moment - that triggers the estranging shock. This device in turn leverages what comes next: a desired *shift* in consciousness that, in principle, resolves out of the distancing effect.

Here, it’s important to distinguish the forms of domination that Rancière is taking on, precisely because the critical enterprise is just as effective at dominating persons as the capitalist one. As May (2007) argues, Rancière’s particular brand of intervention does ‘not concern itself with a particular type of oppression - exploitation - that arises in a particular arena - the mode of capitalist production. Rather, it concerns itself with various dominations that occur throughout the social arena’ (p. 21), including those cause-and-effect pedagogical systems that coordinate other people’s horizons of possible action,

delimit their range of possible movements, or arrange what's apprehendable, thinkable, or doable.

An *educational* argument and a *political* argument thus intersect in Cazden's notion of 'performance before competence', and still more so in Jacotot's notion of performance *as* competence.

As educational logic, performance before competence 'operates by a principle just the reverse of schools', which often 'demand[s] that students gain competence...before they can perform in the domain they are learning' (Gee, 2007). The 'school principle', as it were, is explication: the method that assumes incompetence (lack) and generates the distances to reduce, distances which are indefinitely restaged by assuming that a learner cannot do something - or perform - until they understand, or until their 'student body' is equipped with the proper tools or requisite skill-sets, or is guided into a position of consciousness that would certify a valid performance, authorize a 'qualified' action, or signal a recognizably hearable speech act.

Thinking outside of the school principle, de Castell and Jenson (2007) argue that situated learners can begin to act with competence before being officially competent. Here, understanding does not precede doing, and what one does is not determined in advance by the master's already-achieved knowledge (as a sound model to reproduce). Understanding does not precede the trajectory one enacts, and the clearings - the montage of meanings, figures, imitations, or elements - one constructs or brings to light is, then, one's own *modeling*. If performance *before* competence presupposes - grammatically - an ideal competence 'to be' achieved, performance *as* competence implies a different

syntax, a different drama, where learners are imitating something ‘other’ than the sound model, the established source-code, or the knowledge of the master. Here, one comes to understand (one’s own capacities) through the process, involvement, or action.

As for the situation de Castell and Jenson describe, learners are not situated by the teacher in proximal relation to what they can do (with guidance), or in genetic relation to the objective to be replicated/evaluated, but situated in relation to a ‘real’ thing - an interface, an image, book, screen, gaming system, or artistic tool - that is *exterior* to whatever development ‘zones’, and where the ‘feedback’ (rather than being received from the teacher’s interanimating voice) is immanent to the process of engagement itself, the ‘trial-and-error’ processes of attending to, or being involved in, something.

As a political logic, performance *as* competence means intervening precisely when and where somebody is least likely, least expected, to intervene as an agent involved in shaping their own world, or in refiguring a common/shared world. In other words, performance *as* competence means rupturing a ‘given’ distribution of aptitudes, or what amounts the same thing, it implies a *redistribution* of the sensible. Such performative acts, even in the theatrical sense of acting, can have an a ‘felicitous’ impact to the extent that they have real social or political *effects* for the individuals who *do* them - even if, or especially if, the particular actor has not been recognized as a legitimate speaker, authorized as an envoy of an institution, or entitled by whatever disciplinary - professional body.

When somebody impersonates, imitates or just presumes to act, they perform in a way that separates an ‘acting’ body from a ‘student’ body. That is, in act, it’s possible to

separate a *learning* (incandescent) body from an *explicated* (stultified) body, in the same way anyone does when they astonish themselves with - *voilà* - something they just did. And it is in this same self-surprising way that Rancière's worker-composers *performatively* de-classified themselves from their given place in the social order, from the extant coordinates of what was 'naturally' doable for bodies assigned to an identity, status, or conditioning habitus.

In any case, what matters is the blurring of fixed identities, positions, and talents: the non-alignment of capacity with projected (pedagogical) place, the de-synchronization of a 'real' performance from an endless succession of desiccated preparations. If explication's distance - its episodic logic of stagism and gradualism - at every step reiterates dependence upon the teacher (a fixed category), and defines competence in relation to a distant 'model' (a fixed category) to be at last achieved, then emancipation works by bringing a performance and a competency into the same 'frame', into the same *what if* moment of possible agency. Instead of a distance to reduce, you have a singularity to verify: a doing of equality, the testing of a 'might be', that challenges the very distinction between reality and imitation, expert qualification and a talent imitable by anyone at all.

This chapter will explore the question of imitation in relation to Rancière's notion of 'artistic regimes' (and what he calls the 'politics of the aesthetic') in order to examine how an artistic regime defines a particular (educational) distribution of the sensible that can 'police' bodies (in schools). For the moment, I will define 'police' as a logic that centers learning bodies into positions where they remain self-identical to themselves (in their proper place), or stay self-identical to the outline of their 'explicated bodies'. In

contrast to ‘police’, I will explore a notion of aesthetic education that connects this notion of ‘performance *as* competence’ to a way of thinking imitations, imitators, and impersonators in a new light. I’ll consider Rancière’s artistic regimes - historical systems for the identification of art - as a way of thinking education in terms of how a distribution of the sensible either confines people to their (developmental-explicated) ‘homes’, so to speak, or (alternately) redistributes capacities, putting into play conditions where anyone might (ecstatically) perform in the place of the Other.

### **Aesthetic Regimes: (Un)Binding Sense & Sense**

For Rancière, the question of ‘artistic regimes’ revolves around how (1) imitations (2) the arts or (3) art (in the singular) are identified, and how a specific artistic regime delimits the properties of space and time, what is apprehendable by whom, what can be modeled or imitated, who has the ability to see or to speak, or the talent to perform (*PA*, 13). It will be in this framework that I’ll examine the relation between an artistic regime and forms of (aesthetic) education. In discussing an ‘artistic regime’, I’m less interested in ‘art theory’ than about everyday classroom experience and how everyday learning performances are policed. If I slide between past and present (tenses), I am nonetheless focusing on the *present* of educational dramaturgies and affiliated experiences.

Rancière identifies the first artistic regime, the *ethical regime of images*, with Plato’s *Republic*. In the ethical regime, imitations (images, stories, theatrical performances) do not have a framework that would distinguish them as ‘the arts’. Imitations - what Aristotle would call ‘the arts’, or what we might call ‘art’ - are not, by Plato, distinguished as such. As Bakhtin (1984) puts it, the ‘artistic image’ and a

'philosophical concept' are not differentiated by Plato (p. 112). For Plato, then, an imitation stands as a copy of a phenomenal object/appearance (which is itself a copy of a hidden, eternal reality of transcendent/ideal forms). Since imitations are, in a sense, doubly-corrupt or degraded copies, then images, stories, music, and/or performances must be policed by the wise, that is, evaluated - suppressed or coordinated - in terms of their educational consequences, their social use-value or community effects. Rancière refers to the Platonic regime as the *ethical regime of images* because images, stories and performances are recognized, or are intelligible, in terms of their educative properties and moral-practical outcomes (good or ill) upon classed bodies - identities defined this or that grade/status of occupational metal.

Ethos, for Rancière, is a term that implies more than just moral-practical activity. Ethos resonates with the locative notion of being 'at home' in one's world, and where *feeling* at home means corresponding with, or suitably fitting, one's proper identity in a political community. For Plato, imitations are identified in terms their 'ethical' effects on bodies, that is, their instructional utility in projecting an educational path toward ideas (ideal forms), or in causally formatting a 'good' sense of self-identity with one's given occupation. For this reason, Plato privileges direct speech as the proper means of communicating ideas, since 'living' speech immediately confronts a known auditor, or class of interlocutor. The wise man (dialectician) is in this way able to direct a living meaning to an identifiable class of body in their locatable community place (ethos). By policing imitations (what is apprehendable to whom), identifiable classes of persons are made to perform, reiterate, and embody the imitations that are proper to their expected identity-function.





Figure 15. *Locked In*, James Ciatko (2011) Pencil on Paper

Secondly, Rancière refers to the Aristotelian system as the *representative regime* of ‘the arts’. While Aristotle gives ‘the arts’ - ‘ways of making and doing’ poetic/plastic imitations - a relatively autonomous space, the arts, as such, become visible/identifiable within a rule-bound system of subject matters and genres, with an established syntax of representational possibilities. Shifting the terrain upon which Plato viewed mimetic forms, artistic imitations are no longer viewed as bad copies, but are identified as artistic representations that might provide insight into the nature of the world, or have certain salutary emotional effects for a community of spectators.

The Aristotelian regime opens up a legitimate field to stage and witness imitations called ‘the arts’. Yet Aristotelian poetics, so Rancière argues, not only defines a space of visibility that separates mimetic/poetic representations from moral-practical or social/educative criteria, but simultaneously prescribes and delimits what is *representable* - and what is *not*. As Booth (1984) notes, Aristotle elaborates a kind of ‘handbook’: ‘the *Poetics* tells us...the ingredients... the best ways of mixing those ingredients [and] how we might go about making, or improving, other objects of the same kind’ (p. xvii).

If the representational regime is normative (rule-bound), then Rancière troubles the specular view of Aristotelian mimesis as a means of resembling the world (based on the logic of similitude, where an imitation is understood to mirror nature, or be adequate to a referent in the world). Rancière emphasizes that Aristotle defines *criteria* for the arts: proper codes for how a certain genre of art should be constructed, expectations for what effects different genres should have on spectators, and norms for how sequences of

events should be arranged to elicit evaluable ‘ends’ (‘final causes’ associated with a specific theatrical form, a type of medium, or a musical mode, *etc.*).

As a regime of identification, or a system that brings ‘the arts’ into visibility, the ground of possible representation (techniques for modeling) is staked out in such an organic and (genetically) ‘causal’ way that it is possible to evaluate an artwork as successful or not, good or not, based - circularly - on how the imitation conforms to the determining rules and norms of the system itself.

Whereas in the Platonic regime, immediate speech acts coordinate *which* class of bodies received and recited *which* messages/imitations (that is, who is to absorb which colorfast dye<sup>17</sup>), Aristotelian hierarchy (policing) pivots upon an art that speaks - and that implicitly addresses different audiences according to *ethos* - even in the absence of direct speech (PL). As Rancière points out, different classes of genres were addressed to different classes of social audiences - in their distinct theater of experience: tragedy about, and for, nobles (in the city center) and comedy about, and for, the common (in the outlying districts or *demos*). In the *Poetics*, theatrical performance is given a systematic rationale. Imitation is contained in advance and largely cleansed of ambiguity (ES). The appropriate ‘subjects’ of an art (genre) speak or act in suitable ways (as determined by the rules of genre), and in ways that bind a class of speaker to a type of utterance that fits, or belongs to, that subject/identity.

As Rancière puts it, social hierarchy was recomposed in terms of the conventions of ‘the arts’, and into a closed-system of *possible* representation that was itself viewed as

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<sup>17</sup> The Republic (430 a-b)

the language of 'nature'. As Rancière summarizes, 'the representative primacy of action over characters or of narration over description, the hierarchy of genres according to the dignity of their subject matter, and the very primacy of the art of speaking, of speech in actuality, all of these elements figure into an analogy with a fully hierarchal vision of the community' (PA, 22).

First, what figures into analogy is a distribution of the sensible where social identity and normative role-play are prefigured into the very regime of *imitation* itself. Aristotle elaborates a rational system for the arts that governs the ways in which certain bodies/identities might appear or 'ought' to perform, or exhibit competences associated with a 'genre'.

Second, paralleling Ellsworth's discussion of education(al media), the regime determines, at every step, *percepts* for *precepts* and *axioms* for *affects*.

Like an 'aesthetic engine', the regime of representation determines the (linear) correspondence between the 'texture of work' (what's perceivable) and its intellectual-emotional outcomes among a class of known spectators. In this way, the aesthetic engine coordinates 'sense with sense', co-mapping an oratorical intention with an 'effect' to be experienced or comprehended by an addressee. As Rancière argues, the system was 'predicated on a regime of concordance inherent in representation. [An imitation] was an exhibition of signs of thoughts and emotions that could be read without any ambiguity, because they possessed a *grammar* which was regarded as the language of nature itself... This is what [Aristotelian] *mimesis* means: the concordance between the complex of sensory signs through which the process of *poiesis* [making] is displayed and the

complex of the forms of perception and emotion through which it is felt and understood' (AS, 60).

As with explication, the dramaturge synchronizes perceptible materials - or in Ellsworth's sense, curricular mediations - with what 'sense' can be made from those materials, and what appropriate pathos-affect an addressee should feel when and where (if the artwork is, genetically speaking, a 'success', or the curricular design obtains its uniform outcome - reproducing certain good models of competence - in a known student). In terms of 'aesthetic education', both artistic regimes, in their own ways, enact a distribution of the sensible where essential identities, class roles, and self-evident forms of social/epistemic hierarchy are either regulated by, or structured into, *the way* imitations are coordinated and presented to addressees in a (learning) community. Less obviously, perhaps, both of these regimes preclude the possibility of persons acting out of place, or playing out of role, performing a competence they should not, or cannot, do. By linking identifiable bodies to their place (ethos), the system polices bodies by precluding the deployment of talents, utterances, performances, or creative capacities that do not 'belong' to them.

### **Police Incorporation & 'the Interior' of Explication**

In my first chapter, I talked about what it meant (for me) to be pedagogically homeless. In this section I will look at some of the ways that 'homes' are, educationally speaking, constructed for, or steadily cemented around, persons. Building on my discussion of Rancière's 'artistic regimes', I'll draw upon Adorno's notion of 'interiority' to examine how places, homes, and identities are educationally solidified - and spelled

out in ways that foreclose the possibility of persons acting out of place, or of divorcing an imposed ‘signifier’ (a name) from one’s own ‘body’ (de Certeau, 1988, p. 92). In other words, ‘good’ (aesthetico-political) order works best when persons embody their role, and when there is no time or space - no visible/aesthetic staging - that might set the world apart from its ‘given’ descriptions or offer surplus materials (incandescent fascinations) - all of which, in turn, might challenge the unity of what’s ‘sensible’ about one’s situation, what’s self-evident about one’s identity, one’s horizon of possible actions (including the forms of qualification that decide if, when, and where somebody can ‘seriously’ perform or participate in sharing – and/or polemically reframing - a common world).

As Rancière elucidates police, police is not ideological in the sense that is productive of social illusions that obscure the reality of things. Rather, police simply says: ‘move along, there is nothing to see here’ - there is nothing to argue about, nothing that *can* be seen, challenged, or *re-enacted* (otherwise). In *Dis-agreement*, Rancière refers to police as a ‘given order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task...Policing is not so much the “disciplining” of bodies as a *rule governing their appearing*, a configuration of *occupations* and the *properties of the spaces* where these are occupations are distributed’ (D, 29). In police, one is, as it were, at home - at home in a more or less consensual world, but also spontaneously at home within the formal outline of oneself (as one is positioned, explained, or ‘incorporated’ within that outline). So moderated, individuals remain self-identical to the outline of their explicated bodies (in quasi-organic necessity, without remainder, excess, or passion).

While Egan (1991) does not explicitly address Rancière's police, he does, I think, address a form of educational policing when he examines progressive-constructivist models of social-scientific teaching. These educational models proceed by plotting students in the immediate or the local and, then, from there, teach 'outwards', incrementally, in the fashion of cumulative aggregation (that is, they proceed by emplotting and presenting 'the actual' just as a compass might spin out a spiral pattern from a stable and self-confident centerpoint, from a secure sense of being at home).

This 'common sense' pedagogical model is, as Egan argues, informed by 'educational clichés' that assume that serious learning begins with teaching, and that serious teaching itself is a gradualist affair - one that begins by identifying students 'where they are' (in terms of their local 'interests...stage development, ability level, relevant prior knowledge, learning styles, and so on') and then by adapting pre-existing curricular contents or predetermined skill-sets to 'the familiar environment to which students [putatively] belong' (p. 163).

More than simply offer an 'unimaginative' education (where social facts are ripped from the fabric of narrative, imagery, metaphor, and affective intensity), the progressive-constructivist curriculum risks accreting social facts around the learner - in concentric little (aesthetic) circles - from the inside out, from the simple to the complex (and in such a way that aligns understanding - a pedagogical intention - with an itinerary).

This gradualist mode of 'internalizing' knowledge or, as Plato put it, absorbing the law (*nomos*), is expressed in certain interpretations of Vygotsky's constructivism, and particularly those interpretations 'based on Vygotsky's distinctions between scientific

and everyday concepts', the distance between the two forms, and 'his argument that a *mature* concept is achieved when the *scientific* and *everyday* versions have *merged*' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 48, emphasis added). As Lave & Wenger elaborate, this particular view of proximal development 'consists of a small "aura" of socialness that provides input for the process of internalization viewed as individualistic acquisition of the cultural given' (p.48), that is, the colorfast internalization of community as it is.

Police 'happens' when learner's are explicated into coincidence - when the interiority of the neighborhood is cemented (IS, 58), and where an 'intellectual construction brings a place in *thought* into conjunction with a perceived or perceptible *intuitive* space' (SP, 15). This merging co-location of elements (of words and things, signs and feelings, names and bodies) defines a (police) ethos, a utopia of spontaneous agreement about a state-of-affairs, about where or what one 'is', about what can be thought and what can be done. Borrowing Bakhtin's terms, the 'external world' (what's perceptible), the 'finalized knowledge' of the explicator/explication, and the student's own path are integrated into a 'single plane'.

What Adorno calls 'interiority' signals a parallel move toward security and inwardness, toward drawing around oneself (or others) a structure that he likens to the interior of a residence, a 'domestic' zone where nothing is outlandish or ever in question, precisely because everything is always already in place. As Benjamin comments, the 'interior' functions 'as a "casing"...a protective shell' that armors against any visible 'exterior' (Foster, 1993, p. 179). And as Buck-Morss (1977) strings the various dwelling-place tropes together, the domestic '[*häuslich*] interior has no room in which to unfold' because there is no 'outside' to it, nothing that might offset the self-evidence of things, or

challenge the 'ethical ensemble' of 'furnishings' and 'mirrors' - the sensible coordinates being witnessed and reflected back. As with the slow schematization of one's local neighborhood, the stable 'interior exists, once and for all, frozen in the still-life of a furniture arrangement...characterized by repetitive duplication...[and] mirror images' that face 'inwardly' (p. 119).

If explication stultifies, it does so, in one way, by enclosing bodies within an 'interior', and by anticipating and evaluating what is already *there*, what is to be known. Explication is, in a sense, the algorithm of police. By folding persons within a given world, the explicator frames what's 'doable' for them, binding persons to an assessment of their talents, to what they are equipped to see, and how or what they should perform (*next*). Aesthetically, this systematically frames out an unconstructed ('natural') social habitat by progressively weaving one's felt world - and one's knowledge of it - from what's near to the next closest increment. By scaffolding sense and sense - experience and understanding - the 'art of teaching' explicates a sheltered interiority inasmuch as it methodologically forecloses the distant or outlandish - the accidental or excessive, the intoxicating or unschematized - in order to accrete the immediate/organic features of one's local residence: one's 'ethical sphere' (Buck-Morss, 1977 p. 119), the student's neighborhood (Egan), 'the small "aura"...of the cultural given' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 48), or one's 'ethos' as it is 'sensitively incarnated' (*PA, D*). At the same time, as Egan (1992) notes, learners are not encouraged (or permitted) to 'try on' far-flung qualities or foreign 'identifications' (p. 81), nor permitted, then, to imitatively 'act out' distant competencies or perform in the place of the other.



To little-by-little disclose/unveil the world as it is (in *any* form) implies that a state-of-affairs *can* be steadily illuminated, and that someone can do the illuminating, and that everything leading to up to now is a (literal) prehistory of the present (NH). At the same time, *through* this constructivist-explicative emplotment, social roles and normal identities risk becoming essentialized as such. As Santner (1996) describes the interior décor more broadly, individuals are, through various institutional ‘rites’, ‘socializing’ rituals, and educative ‘procedures...endowed with a socially intelligible status’ that is ‘reassuring for those individuals [and] the society as well. The smooth functioning of these procedures *reassures* the community that it, too, exists, that there is something “real” about the social facts and values - names, titles, currency, genders, and the like - that it [institutional rites & educative rituals] consecrates and produces’ (p. 145).

Echoing Benjamin’s shell-and-casing metaphors, Popen (2002) refers to a ‘discourse of containment’ in education, a curriculum which makes these reassuring social facts and roles intelligible to students. As I’m taking her words, a ‘discourse of containment’ takes the words, scenes, and stories of others so that they ‘make sense’ within the containing discursive order. As with police, Popen argues that a ‘discourse of containment produces...legitimizes and governs what can be said and who can speak’ (p. 383). Opposing ‘metaphor’ (transpositional elements that might soften up the spaces between words and what’s visible) the discourse of containment reiterates settled ‘literalisms’; opposing unofficial performances by everyday actors and social groups, it stages the ‘entrenchment of official stories’ populated by ‘heroic’ political protagonists; and to exteriority and readings-against-the-grain, it promotes a more or less choral

‘rendition’ of staid descriptions of states-of-affairs, as well as technocratic accounts of ‘democratic’ agency (p. 391-393).

Populating all of this with my own intentions, these are all ‘literalisms’ that unlink (democratic) agency *from* the creative capacity of ‘anyone’. By identifying who is qualified, who seriously acts or is capable of having an impact, the ‘doing’ of everyday actors is devalorized, or made subordinate, to the experts or institutional envoys. In the ‘competence *before* performance’ logic of the schooling system, the range of possible acts/actors - as well as the scope of possible game moves - is decided in advance, putting ‘real doing’ in the hands of the accredited: the qualified, the protagonist, the model actor.

By delimiting what a learner can apprehend, try on or try out, bodies are urged to stay integral to the explication - and the theater of proper role-play - they are explained within. What Rancière calls ‘incorporation’ (IS, 89) is, in this respect, the gradual unveiling of an interiority, a furnishing of occupations, of ways of appearing and embodying social relations, that ‘we all’ - at some ‘deep level’ of our explicated being - (are supposed to) agree upon.

In police, then, one is lawfully at home in the world, in a spontaneously agreeable (and one might say Kantian) way, but at home in relation to an outside, an unknown, or an extreme that is composed as *Other* - that is, students are contained-and-entrained against an exteriority that is aesthetically removed as something dark, anxiety-inducing, or relationally subaltern. As Lather (1991) points out, this centering logic does not recognize meaning-making as action, as a pliable, ongoing, and open-ended ‘process of production between text and audience’: rather, it positions teachers as the ‘origin’ of an

‘innocent’ discourse that puts everybody ‘elsewhere than the Other’, while suppressing the sense that ‘everyone is someone else’s Other’ (p. 138). As the sound method, this way of teaching defines an interiorizing path where ‘consensual readings’ are teased out and certain preferred (critical) performances are replicated. Second, these rites and rituals institute, and risk passing on, the same integral footing where ‘the “Other” is forever ‘the problem’ for which ‘we’ are ‘the solution’ (p. 138).

More generally speaking, Rancière refers to this centered sense of ‘we’ as the ‘safety of incorporation’, an elsewhere-than-the-other interior where individuals are explained within - and proximally reassured by - the ‘supposed naturalness of orders’, where classifications, appropriate ways of saying and appearing, are synchronically arranged to re-present a harmonious ‘image of the [social] whole’, an enactment of a ‘the One’ - a social body in ethical unity with itself, with all the parts of that body performing their identity (i.e., police) (SP, 32).

As aesthetic form, police is analogous with the ideal of consensus: the ‘mapping together of a discursive space and a territorial space [which makes] each concept correspond to a point in reality and each argument coincide with an itinerary on a map’ (DW, pp. 31-32). And as a form of aesthetic education, explication synchs learners into coincidence with the teacher’s emplotment: by working from the simple to complex, from the near to the next-closest, or by unveiling (bit-by-bit) what’s hidden from view, explication enacts a ‘coincidence of intellectual orbits’ - a discourse of containment - that harmonically co-maps the visible (sense) and the articulable (sense), binding the texture of perceptible materials with what can be understood, sensation with its pathos effect. As a method that’s embodied by learners - as the way of being taught - explication reiterates

a type of model performance that, like some generational affliction, can be indefinitely restaged.



Figure 16. Forkbeds from *In the Faculty Room* ('20 Second Time Out' Edition)

### **Bad Imitators**

In this section, I will examine aesthetic and theatrical elements that are inimical to (educational) policing. First, for Rancière, if there is a truly disorderly conduct to be associated with imitators it's due to the fact that imitators are not in place, not doing their occupation. Whereas the wise dialectician dramaturgically arranges and mediates 'imitations' for others, an imitator is *doing* them, that is, not doing what they 'should' be doing, their assignment. As Rancière reflects on the Platonic regime, in a good

‘choreographic community’ - one that ‘sings and dances its own proper unity’ - there is to be no theatrical staging or aesthetic space-time for shareable images, imitators, and imitations.

Since this good community is characterized by persons who are doing their ‘work’ and, therefore, embodying their ‘given’ talents, ability-statuses, and expected identities, ‘the Platonic proscription of the poets is based [first] on the impossibility of doing two things at once’ (PA, 13). The problem of the imitations and imitators can be seen as the ethical calamity of persons impersonating parts, roles, talents, or trajectories that are not ‘theirs’ to impersonate. As a result, the imitator blurs the system of solid identifications that sustains the proper order and functioning of the good community. Imitations generate ‘ill-feelings’ not simply because they are copies which might lead the foolish from the truth or the ideality, but because they permit, accidentally, the confusion (or unpredictable multiplication) of possible roles, names, places, and positions: the *impersonation* of identities and competences that may be non-identical with one’s good, ‘model’ destination. Theater is a ‘detergent’ that makes the colors run.

Theater - the theater stage itself - testifies to a space-time interval where bodies (both performers *and* spectators) are not inhabiting their given role. The theater stage also, however, testifies to a stage of appearance where a choreographic form of community might witness a distant presentation of itself - an imitation or appearance that might throw that choreographic idyll of self-same roles (and self-evident identities) out of self-identical whack (that is, out of police consensus).

Thus, the ‘staging’ of an ‘appearance’ in common, as mediating (distant) term, might in turn convulse, rupture, or remap what would otherwise be a choreographic community at-home-in-itself: a world of sensibly self-evident roles where the only identity you can impersonate is ‘you’, and the only mask available is the one that is ‘yours’ - or the one being formatted for you by the wise dialectician who knows the ‘prelude’ to your song<sup>18</sup> (Republic, 532). By doing away with the theater stage - the space-time of appearances - Plato would evacuate the very *staging* in which unauthorized exteriorities, mediating image-texts, foreign masks, and far-flung personae might present themselves to the unsolicited, to ‘bad’ spectators who should be embodying their song (classification). To this ‘good’ or ethical distribution of the sensible, Rancière contrasts what is inimical (aesthetically-speaking) to regimes of direct speech. Whereas as the living speech act of a wise teacher knows its addressee (the quality of the learner’s metal), an ‘orphaned word’ or ‘dead letter’ wanders ‘aimlessly and insecurely’ not knowing whose ears or eyes to engage, or whose class(room) to address or effect, instruct, improve, move upward, or socialize.

Here, a random or wayward image-text is afflicted with the same disease as the theater stage. They both testify to, and are a part of, a space-time configuration that disturbs ‘the clear partition of identities, activities, and spaces’ (PA, 21). The *political* dilemma of ‘writing’ is not simply that it distorts Truth, but that it ‘wanders aimlessly without knowing who to speak to or who not to speak to’ (PA, 13). This defines the ‘politics of writing’, which has nothing to do with the politics of the person who did the writing: what matters isn’t the content of the message, but the fact that an orphaned word

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<sup>18</sup> *Nomos*, according to G.M.A. Grube (Trans.) can be translated as both ‘song and law’ (p. 183).

or image-text has no immediate addressee. By ‘not knowing’, that is, by being ‘dead’ to the status or condition of the one who apprehends the mediating term, the image-text discoordinates any legitimate ordering of ‘discourse with bodies’, any clean linkage between the intentions of words and their (ideal) effects upon (known) auditors (PA, 21).

The dilemma is not writing’s ‘textuality’ per se, since writing, as Plato argues in the *Phaedrus*, has the same status as an image: both are bad copies.<sup>19</sup> The dilemma comes down to who is able to, or designated to, apprehend what perceptible materials under what stipulations, and whether an encounter with a song, story, image, mask, performance, or noble lie has been pedagogically staked out in advance. As a politics of the aesthetic, ‘living speech’ is meant to ensure that what’s intentional - what’s freighted into voice-and-word - is not only communicated *immediately*, in self-transparent truthfulness (Derrida’s concern), but that the right words find the right ears, the right *logos* conforms, logistically, to the right social receiver (Rancière’s concern). Rancière is, therefore, much less concerned with the deconstruction of Truth than how words and images might circulate without governing rationale, and how any-body might apprehend and re-adjudicate chance utterances and images (not proper to them). An image-text thus unthreads the connective fabric between ‘the effects of language and the positions of bodies in shared space’ (PA, 13). The wandering of an image-text - or the movement of someone who just attentively wanders - tends to cross the wires of who should see or hear or do what. An accidental mediation thus ‘risks’ putting filaments of presence,

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<sup>19</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, Plato bestows transparency to the living ‘voice’ in that it immediately evoke ideas (forms) while conferring to the ‘written word’ the mediate status of an ‘image’ (copy of a copy). In the Seventh Epistle, Plato thus commits to writing the idea that ‘every man of worth, when dealing with matters of worth, will be far from exposing them to ill feeling and misunderstanding among men by committing them to writing’.

experience, or desire into play - exteriorities that would otherwise be foreclosed. Finally, there is no custodian present to *reanimate* the intentions of the sign/image, or adjudicate/explicate their meaning.

In material terms, some foot of the social body, K., who in class has been identified (and so identifies herself) with a slow-moving reading group, is, by cousin X., samizdated (*v.*) a book - a quasi-adultish book which, fortuitously, has some kind of picture section that plaits out most of the punishing (to, say, a third-grader) textual-discursive points contained therein. Engaged on her own trajectory with this image-text (a path invisible to the schooling system), K. improvises a variation on 'the book' (also invisible to the school and, in that regard, detached either way from the school's order of superior-inferior classifications), which in the end amounts to a composite of imitations: emulations of a 'mature' prose style, with stylized 'imitations' of the pictures (that might build upon or color beyond the lines of the original images). Whether good or not - or true or false or not - K.'s acts are simply the product of what anyone 'pretends' to do when they attend to something, for real.

In this case, imitation (mimetic activity) implies not simply coming to understand the book, but implies performance - making or doing - as a form of poetic competency. A learner plays out a serious competency as child's play, or 'does' - in the practical key of make-believe - *as if* she was an 'artist, too'. By imitating the *wrong* book (or performing in the place of the other) the learner eludes the place of the explicated body by playing out a 'classless' capacity, a capacity that does not fit into the art of serialized improvement. Just grab-bagging a line from Deleuze & Guattari (1987), they suggest that these kinds of 'gestural, mimetic, ludic and semiotic' events - events enacted in the



autodidactic performance of ‘a child’ - ‘regain their freedom and extricate themselves from the “tracing”, that is, from the dominant competence of the teacher’s language - a microscopic event upsets the balance of power’ (p. 15).

But what exactly is ‘upset’ in this so-called ‘balance of power’? And if these kinds of performances are invisible to the school, what would it take to recall them, to witness, verify and audience (*v.*) these performances as truly competent acts? First, what might be ‘upset’ is less some clashing power relation *between* master and student, or two distinct ‘classes’ of person. What I think the act puts into question is the literal opposition between these two - now suddenly less stable - identities, classes, or statuses/categories of personhood.

By mimetically deploying utterances, gestures, and ludic acts that would, in principle, be the essential property of the other, what’s *upset* is the proper apportionment of who is entitled to do *this* (perform in this way) and who gets to do *that* (not perform, stay invisible, or enact the role proper to their ethos or identity). Rather than stage battle scenes, these theatrical acts throw into question the very coordinates of *who is who*, exactly. This throws into question, then, who is rightfully entitled to ‘do’ a talent, or is authorized to perform a given role, title, ritual, class-act, gender, occupation, *etc.* A redistribution of the sensible, as Rancière outlines the notion, means *taking* ‘part’ (in both the participatory and the theatrical sense of ‘part taking’). For example, one takes part by taking or expropriating certain performances associated with those who have been consecrated, or given some crown of status, by authorizing social institutions. By imitating out of place, bad imitators blur the police(d) lines between theater and situation, impersonation and reality, self and other, exceeding the boundaries of the closed forms or

discursive systems that would contain them. And by taking part, the bad imitator shows the 'sheer contingency' of any 'given' order of inequality or rank (i.e., pedagogical fiction, epistemocracy, hierarchal ordering) (D, 30).

Secondly, Jacotot's magic, I suppose, is not simply that he presupposes the conditions for such unexpected acts, but elaborates a rationale (equality) for verifying them. This rationale sets up positions to witness and authenticate a performance, and bring the scene (out of the solitary or the invisible) into legitimate visibility (or audibility). As Lave & Wenger (1991) argue, one can, like an ignorant schoolmaster, set into play the conditions and/or resources for 'legitimate' learning performances where learners do - in situ and full on - the actual practices of the (so-called) expert. And to verify such modes of (learning) performance means constituting them as serious acts, 'equal' acts that might disturb a policed distribution of sensible, as well as extend or alter the rules of the activity itself, the ways of creatively 'laying hold' to things and releasing from them new possibilities of meaning' (Buck-Morss, 1991, p. 264, see fn 13).

That said, Jacotot is always nothing less than the sure-footed hero of the story (who dramatically, and rather cleanly, 'discovers' the equality of intelligence). As the champion of equality's fable, Jacotot himself never bears witness to any of those messy scenes, here or there, where the crowns of institutional accreditation melt into hats of silly string. Perhaps these tragic scenes - which may elicit unwanted affects (laughter) - are events that might be witnessed, too, since these kinds of performances illustrate that an 'accredited status' may not be as credible as the accredited might credit it. Whatever the case, the question is about deciding which 'reality' a teacher - or a learning community -

can authenticate, or what kinds of theaters of doing ‘might be’ legitimately constituted and circularly confirmed, reciprocally audienced.

### **Equidistance & Indifference: Aesthetic Education**

If the explicator elaborates an ‘art of distance’, is there another kind of distance that makes the emancipated? Rancière identifies this other kind of distance when he writes: ‘The book - the *Telemaque* or any other - placed between two minds sums up the ideal community inscribed in the materiality of things. The book is the equality of intelligence’ (IS, 38).

In terms of the politics of the aesthetic, a mediating third-term (‘thing-in-common’) that is shared between two equal intelligences already triangulates a different distribution of bodies and capacities in relation to what is sensible. The first relation of equality is established between what Jacotot-Rancière call the ‘indifferent materiality’ of ‘the book’ to its reader. The second relation of equality is enacted in terms of the intellectual *equidistance* (topographically) shared by master and student in relation to the thing-in-common. Whereas ‘explication is the binding of one mind to another...the materiality of the book keeps two minds at an equal distance’ (IS, 32). So *staged*, the book sets into play an ‘entirely liberated relationship between the intelligence of the student and the intelligence of the book’ (IS, 13).

In the context of Ellsworth’s discussion of education(al media), the equidistance to the object of knowledge - be it a book, image, screen or an engagement with creative tools - already short-circuits the ends-oriented logistics, the strategic modes of address,

and the expert voice-overs of classical-realist education(al media). And regardless of what is curricularly in the book, *equidistance* separates learners from endless guidance-containment, putting into play conditions that might divide a learning, acting, or doing body from their explicated body.

Why, however, is the book's materiality 'indifferent', and how does indifference factor - aesthetically - into intellectual emancipation? First, staged as Jacotot staged it, a book or image does not address a particular reader or, like the explicator, seek out a situated student body where they are and, from there, synch up educating with prior knowledge, ability level, student interest, social location, and personological conditions - nodal points associated with identifying lacks and sorting persons into pre-existing hierarchies of representation.

Blind to the knowledge of ignorance, indifference thus ices out the parental-paternal aspiration of teachers to place the children of 'slaving mothers' or, as it were, talk to 'the foot' or locate the vulnerable objects of emancipatory desire. The indifference of the mediating term to its addressee signals an aesthetic *cut* - a mediating *interface* - that unlinks a possible performance from an explicated position/assignment. From there, Jacotot demanded that learners go forth - in apartness - into a common 'forest of signs that by themselves don't want to say anything, don't correspond with that thought or that feeling' (IS, 67).

In this regard, aesthetics de-polices learning from the classical-realist educational logic. The materiality of the book, so Rancière argues, is akin to signs and images that are no longer alive with the animating thought or oratorical will/intention of an author,

authority, or pedagogical dramaturge. In Jacotot's own idiom, equidistance describes a common remoteness to, or common intellectual 'orbit' around, the thing to be known or done. Whether 'the book' is textual or spectacle, image or screen, this way of staging things establishes a mediating term that puts intelligence in 'free orbit...around the absent star of the truth' (IS, 77).

Instead of an accretive discourse of containment, egalitarian (equa)distance enacts an 'aesthetic cut' that divides bodies in as much as it brings intelligences into *common* relation to what is felt, encountered, engaged (IS, 77). Here, learners who capably describe their own 'orbit' are emancipated to the extent that they are no longer subject to the explicator's 'gravitational' drag, the by-degree 'coincidence of orbits...we have called stultification' (IS, 59). Recognizing that no two orbits or performances 'are alike', and that there are, as Jacotot writes, 'a thousand paths in intellectual space open to [a learner's] will' (IS, 59), an ignorant master disconnects his/her agency - or his/her own 'complex of signs' - as the dramaturgical cause of somebody else's educated effect.<sup>20</sup>

*Indifference* in this way subtracts the master's 'already-achieved' concepts and oratorical will from the performative scenes of competent translation, thinking, making, or doing. Whereas the art of teaching founds itself upon the 'self-evident' difference between minds and capacities, universal teaching gambles its 'credibility' on 'the bet of the similarity of minds' (IS, 67), on the placelessness of competent doing. By suspending

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<sup>20</sup> If Adorno (1997) argues that authentic art/aesthetic experience 'determines indeterminacy', he also fashions an exclusionary argument where, as far I understand it, only the most historically-advanced artists working with the most historically-advanced techniques and materials are in the (cutting-edge) historical position to determine this (now, quite special) 'aesthetic indeterminacy' (as a continuous or, as it were, a *rolling* 'negation' of the administered/determined 'reality'). What Rancière-Jacotot suggest is that any *ignorant* schoolmaster can (albeit far less dramatically) 'determine indeterminacy' by assuming intellectual equality and by verifying the creative capacity of anonymous anyones.

the pedagogical faculties, indifference entails the cancellation of those ‘interventionary’ pedagogical ‘moves’ that would position learners as ‘recipients’ of ‘educational services’ (on the way to equality/awareness); in turn, indifference positions learners *in* equality as serious performers engaged in the process of translating their worlds and ‘shaping their life-conditions’ (Fraser, cited in Lather, 1991, p. 47).

By breaking with explication’s dramatic engine, the logic of the ‘aesthetic regime’ has a ‘*political*’ effect to the extent that the *loss of destination* [aesthetics] presupposes disrupts the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations’ (ES, 72). Instead, learners do what anyone does when they are ‘on their own path’ for real: one makes sense by engaging something and relating it to everything else (NL, 52); one links what they know to what they don’t know; one formulates ‘a translation’, a complex of signs, images, and acts, by connecting the near with the far - and without any inaugural ‘starting point’, ‘privileged medium’, or homogeneous ‘outcome’ (ES, 22; 63). If there are a ‘thousand paths’ in ‘intellectual space’ open to a learner’s energy/desire, then each path described (rather than being a scene of enlightenment) will compose its own montage of light-bright connections, its own complex of idiosyncratic filaments - by way, or *through*, the learner’s own constellation of acts.

Not unlike those computer screens that partitioned the magister/ial me from my students in Poland, Jacotot’s ‘aesthetic cut’, by subtracting ‘double-lack’ from the scene, enacts a possible redistribution of the sensible: a temporary anonymous zone where performance and competence are brought into the same frame of doing. As a method of equality, this puts into play learning situations that indetermine ‘the relations between

bodies, the world they live in, and the way in which they are [supposedly] “equipped” to adapt to it’ (ES, 72).

In explication, students are asked to occupy their developmental ethos, even as they are made to advance. As Egan describes the dramaturgy, developmental grammars entail fidelity to place, where exteriority - what’s discontinuous, accidental, far-flung, or aesthetically dicey - is evacuated from the scene (or relegated to its suitable curricular space-time/teachable moment).

In Rancière’s discussion of the ethical regime, it is the unauthorized circulation of image-texts that might depressurize this ‘choreographic’ police distribution by permitting the staging of inopportune imitations/masks. By moving without a ‘system of legitimation’ or direct mode of address, an image-text threatens to introduce the ‘ill-feelings’ of the ‘bad’ sensorium by soliciting no one in particular. What Rancière calls *literarity* is the circuitous movement of images, signs, and visual presences - an accidental circulation that unthreads the coordinate-based ‘explications’ of the representational regime. Without a ‘system of legitimation’, *literarity* implies where there is longer any rationale determining precepts for precepts or axioms for affects. And what aesthetics disorders is the ‘old’ discourse of containment that would co-map intentions with effects, names with bodies, roles with imitational possibilities, and itineraries with inhabited (and reproducible) models.

More concretely, the worker-artists (*etc.*) from *The Nights of Labor* were exactly those ‘anonyms’ who deployed an aesthetic recess, so to speak, that they supposedly did not have (a stolen moment from the workshop) in order to engage a sensible that was not

designed for them, not intended for their eyes or ears. By contrast, they encountered the images and textual traces of other worlds freighted in the weird samizdat of ‘lentil sacks’, on display in windows, or cobbled out of discarded libraries. Insofar as these media were the vehicles of their own distance, they were sensible encounters that were not, logistically-speaking, addressed to ‘the low’ - nor geared to leverage a ‘consciousness’ up toward an altitudinous above.

Whereas ‘Mary’ is, in the competence-before-performance school logic, a kind of place-holder for the disinherited (*on the way* to the ideal of social equality), Gauney is, as it were, an ‘eager autodidact’ who acts *as if* he’s the equal of anyone else. To move in the way that Gauney travels - ‘he walks and walks’ (SP, 51) - to appropriate a ‘free gaze’ (unlinked from home ethos) - to enact an estranging distance from oneself - all of this is indicative of an ‘aesthetic rupture’ that ‘does not involve illusion but is a matter of shaping a new body and a new sensorium for oneself’ (ES, 71). Here, performance *as* competence entails the shaping of a new body/sensorium that is ‘neither a re-presentation of reality nor a critique of representations, but a new, affirmative construction of the real’ (Shaviro, 1993, p. 23). Neither a ‘transparent reflection of some reality capturable through conceptual adequation’ (Lather, 1991, p. 25), nor a never-ending negation of ideological reflections (Adorno), one gets up in the grill of police, so to speak, by affirmatively enacting ‘a reality’ that stands in contrast with, or in *supplement* to, self-evident orders, police distributions, and police(d) imitations (ways of appearing).

What’s inseparable from Gauney’s own productive ‘shaping’ is that, before anything, the ‘aesthetic effect is an effect of dis-identification’ (ES, 73). Dis-identification implies that persons are able disincorporate themselves from a given



location/name/ethos or explicated body - not by understanding things, but by performatively being *more than*, or by saying 'me, too'. If persons disturb police, they do so by *adding* themselves to a closed situation, by acting or appearing 'out of place' (D). And this kind of acting (or appearing) confronts the self-evidence of police by challenging the very distinction between appearance and reality (theater and world), between an essential identity and a matching competence/role (proper to that identity). Before anything, emancipation is always 'taken' as a 'proof given to oneself' (SP, 51), a demonstration of capacity that is 'not secession, but self-affirmation as a joint sharer in a common world [where] one can play the same game as the adversary' (SP, 49). This game is the capacity of anyone to act in the gap between 'sense and sense', the capacity to (re)mediate things, to 'embrace the distance between words and things...[to] embrace the unreality of representation' (SP 51).

This kind 'gaming' implies a *classless* de-synchronization *from* one's assigned 'part' in the incorporative fictions of the social body, as well as from the coordinate-grammar of institutions that would define the formal place-holders for various bodily 'parts', as well as the specificity of their possible moves, the rules of their appearing, and who is sanctioned to play or speak.

### **Doing Uncannily: Reframing the Unhomelike**

If police defines a self-evident mapping of social roles and itineraries, critique often requires negating that map, seen as a tool or apparatus of entrapment. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Brechtian solution - or the critical logic of avant-gardist rupture - is to shock bodies out of containment, their sense 'reassurance', or estrange them from

complacent acceptance of the actual/timeless (i.e., the point is to precipitate a crisis in ‘the interior’, to discomfit bodies out of their ignorance, their sense of being ‘at-home’ in the illusionism). The *causal* supposition is that a refunctioned theater - an estrangement effect, aesthetic trauma, or a yoking together of incompatible elements - will lead spectators to the ‘conscientization’ that what passes for social fact is illusory (and therefore transformable). In this section, I’ll examine the notion of the uncanny (*unheimlich*) as an aesthetic term, then evaluate its critical function as vehicle for ‘shock’; in turn, I’ll re-examine the uncanny (*un-homelike*) in terms of ‘performance as competence’.

In the critical tradition, what might be called the ‘artist-as-producer’ tradition proceeds from the premise that *aesthetic* validity and *political* validity are co-mappable terms. From that notion, art is assigned a task: to intervene, to make reference to its own illusion-making artifices, or speak to the people (at the level of the peoples’ ‘empirical consciousness’) in the service of tearing off the Snuggies® of the anesthetized.

In any case, aesthetic shock, with *exposure* as cause, is presumed to have a beneficial distancing effect. In his discussion of surrealist aesthetics, Foster (1993) describes a rationale for the ‘uncanny’ based on the principle that spectators could, in theory, be shocked ‘into another reality that is also somehow a critique of this reality’ (Foster, 1993, xi). As Freud defined the uncanny (*unheimlich*), an unhomelike encounter is seen as a traumatic ‘return of repressed’ - the return of a repressed exteriority that rattles a person’s secure sense of being at home in the world. As Foster continues, the shock of the uncanny shatters the interiority of closed structures, fixed social furnishings, and conceptual ‘mirrors’: a disorienting aesthetic ‘trauma’ (i.e., return of the repressed) is

seen to 'disrupt unitary identity, aesthetic norms, and social order'. As embraced by the 'historical avant-gardes', the uncanny (shock) could in this way be 'directed to critical ends' (p. xvii). And to critical ends, then, 'the return of the repressed renders the subject anxious and the phenomenon ambiguous...*anxious ambiguity* produces the primary effects of the uncanny: the indistinction between the real & imagined', interior & exterior, reality & surreality (p. 7).

As Foster explains, this sense of 'indistinction' pivots upon the 'anxious crossings of contrary states, as hysterical confusings of different identities' - crossings and confusings that might derealize the self-evidence of things (titles, social roles, genders, hierarchal positions) so as to 'open' the world up to 'the future' (change) (p.189). The uncanny could thus be presented, artistically or theatrically, in order to break down oppositions between 'self and other, waking and dreaming' (p. 212). Against reassuring interiority, then, the un-homelike, as a distantiating device, could be leveraged at spectators in the service of cracking open the domestic (*häuslich*) 'casing' of the consciousness that 'reflects at home' - fragmenting the 'protective shell' that moderates desire, contains the play meanings, wards off exteriority, and keeps 'good' selves within the (police) outline of themselves.

While Maxine Green (1995) dampens the trauma of surrealism, she argues, in educational contexts, that aesthetic 'shocks of awareness' may similarly prevent students from 'coincid[ing] forever with themselves' (p. 126). Shock (exposure) dis-locates - gets learners to 'not coincide' - and impels them to 'question' things. Estrangement thus facilitates an 'awakening' in students which can elicit pathos effects (e.g., indignation at social injustice) and move them to 'dialogue with others' - a dialogue which functions to

‘clarify’, ‘rectify’ and to some extent therapeutically integrate those various shocks of awareness.

But is it exposure to an image-artwork that is doing the *effecting*, or is it the teacher’s post-traumatic integrative dialogue that is doing the trick, a model of dialogue that, in Greene’s assessment of it, illuminates the experience while seemingly inclusive of every speaker in a ‘community of the wide awake’? Thus, can it be said that estrangement shifts persons to (critical) awareness/empathy, or to predictable forms of agency that might challenge social injustice?

Rancière’s own answer is that there is no formula that can decide the relation between aesthetic and political validity, no causal link - short of explication - that could harmonize ‘the aesthetics of politics with the politics of the aesthetic’ (*PA, D*). This means that there is no rationale that can govern the relation, or predictably anticipate the link, between aesthetic encounters and ethical effects, between the texture of a sensuous shock and a community of wakeful bodies.

By the same token, then, it could be surmised that shocks of awareness might arguably induce other effects: disorientation, ennui, or even the anxious wish to re-armor oneself in one’s at-home sense of self and community. Here, examining the power of empowering knowledge, Foucault warns that there is a kind of ‘violence’ in ‘the position’ of knowing demystifiers who, ‘siding against’ the mystified other, would take it upon themselves to tear away the veil of enchanted ignorance so as to reveal the hidden truth, or to short-circuit someone’s illusions (Foucault, cited in Lather, 1991, p. 141). And since, for Foucault, ‘the hidden meaning is not the final truth about what is going on,

finding it [or unveiling it] is not necessarily liberating' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 124). To connect these points in argument, the intellectual who demystifies the ignorant other not only risks enacting a form of violence, but they demystify in the service of unveiling a hidden reality that is, as Foucault argues, less the truth of things than the enlightening agent's own 'discursive practice'. This 'practice' elaborates yet another containment field (one which restages the pedagogical fiction: it is a distribution of the sensible that puts the ignorant in their place of lack, with the critical thinker right *there*, holding the defibrillator).

At the same time, the anxious ambiguity that may result from the violence of shattering someone's so-called 'illusion' - that is, forcing someone to not 'coincide with themselves' - may arguably precipitate a somatic-nervous turmoil that, at the end of the day, puts into play thought forms that seek out more 'reassurance', more foundational identity - not less. (Or as dramatized in Chapter 1, students may, deploying their own tactics of resistance, effectively repulse the would-be 'liberatory curriculum'). As Lather illustrates, pedagogical efforts to shatter illusions and criticalize students frequently do not have the same illuminating outcomes, or the expected pathos effects, that are ascribed to the distantiating causes. Students report, instead, being 'positioned' as culpable for their 'wrong' desires-pleasures-investments; or they report being 'shaken up'; or they report being moved *toward* an identity that itself a fixed placeholder for 'the oppressed' (Lather, 1991, p. 140). In the name of reciting the same critical song, learners are asked to take the site of the 'subjugated' - as prefigured by the 'transformative intellectual'. These critical efforts thus risk binding students to a discourse which may not be theirs, while devalorizing or displacing students' own lived experiences and translations of

things. Meanwhile, the curriculum dictates an ensemble of ‘correct’ performances that may in turn block other countless (samizdat) trajectories for seeing and making sense, for incandescently acting and reshaping one’s world - *for real*.

Rethinking the uncanny, I’d like to argue that Jacotot - by presupposing equality and by opening learning up to the unforeseen - sets into play exactly what is most unhomelike about the *unheimlich*: being non-coincident with oneself, experimenting in the uncertain spaces between theater and world, self and other, night-time dreams and daytime situations. What’s shocking, in this sense, is not *exposure* to a shock, but doing things; unexpected and self-surprising acts that might challenge the rules that govern the ways in which bodies ‘should’ appear, or dispute the ensemble of moves that (certain) persons are permitted to make.

Moreover, to enact one’s own distance from oneself - to become a stranger to oneself - implies dividing *oneself* from the ‘mire of common sense’, the security of one’s ‘own country, language, sex and identity’ (Kristeva, 1986, p. 299). And here, in a place of ‘exile’ - and hopefully of adventure, too - it’s a lot tougher to stand with the ‘We’ who would see themselves as the ‘solution’ for ‘the problem’ of the Other.

For Kristeva (1986), the notion of ‘exile’ means thinking a new, decentered type of ‘dissident intellectual’ who, as such, is no longer the supreme abstract commander of the symbolic order, is no longer the ‘instrument of discursive rationality’, the ‘rebel who attacks political power’ (pp. 294-295). Still, pushing this dissident idiom just one small step further, what if the aim were to get *the intellect* out of ‘the intellectual’ and *into* the

samizdat - that is, into the actional, lateral sets of relations between actors, mediating affordances, and their performances?

Opposing the logic of estrangement-distanciation, Rancière instead affirms ‘lightening, an alleviation...[the point] is to create some breathing room, to loosen the bonds that enclose a spectacle within a form of visibility, bodies within an estimation of their capacity, and possibility within the [police mire] that makes the “state of things” seem evident, unquestionable’ (AFI, 261). By doing or acting uncannily, the self-evidence of ‘at home’ states-of-affairs are shown to be ambiguous *by* persons who see, act, and do what they cannot do. The person who acts out a talent or a form of creative capacity that does not ‘belong’ to them are in fact enacting ‘a reality’ of doing that is much more than an ‘imitation’, and is in no way an ‘illusion’.

### **Eagerness & Incandescence: Affordances of Equality/Play**

To the adventure hero anything can happen,[s]he can become anything.[ S]he too is not a substance, but a pure function of adventure and escapades - *Bakhtin*

The word experimental is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as of an act the outcome of which is unknown - *John Cage*

Inextricable from Jacotot’s notion of intellectual emancipation was his discovery that *wanting* is all that is necessary for *doing*. As Rancière puts it, wanting - or eagerness - is ‘the common failing of those who do what they have no place to do’ (NH, 18). As for the common failing of the eager, Jacotot describes emancipation’s ‘path’ in terms of those pleasures that move with, and (circularly) amplify, the acts of emancipation itself: in a word, performance *as* competence. If intelligence is equal, then what the intelligence does is an effect of ‘the will’ that attends to, or is involved in, something. And if

eagerness thus implies desire, pleasure, or a sense of play, then (emancipated) learning might be seen as a libidinal affair before it is a 'semiological activity' (Weiss, 1989, p. 70); or, to avoid any causal syntax, seriously playing with signs, images, and sounds *is* a 'libidinal affair'. What matters, then, are those modes of engagement that happen by way of a 'wanting' that is in turn recharged by the immanent pleasure of emancipated doing (i.e., *feeling* oneself within a 'circle of power'). When Jacotot decides to verify equality as point of departure, he subtracts the distance to get to. This makes equality - or creative capacity - an immanent practice rather than goal, an embodied 'way of doing' rather than a severed facet in an incrementalist's regime.

For Jacotot, will is in the doing, in the performativity of things, where 'wanting' is remunerated in terms of 'the adventure', and where the 'energies' of equality 'are engendered and augmented by their own actualization' (*SP*, 50). Unconcerned with the master's distance, this kind of 'wanting' is not 'in want' of something absent, but points toward a mode of eagerness that is immanent to its own operations, and continuous with what a learner is absorbed in - ludic affordances, samizdat exteriorities, incandescent engagements. Here, there are not 'two sorts of minds' - 'no hierarchy of intellectual capacity'; there is only the 'energy communicated to the intelligence by the will for discovering and combining new relations...This is what opens the way to all adventure' (*IS*, 27). What comes into play here is a mode of engagement that 'all people' hook into when they 'look for their path themselves' (*IS*, 105). As Lave & Wenger (1991) emphasize, this 'actional' way of looking, learning, and doing - when persons 'are not reduced to their minds' - is inseparable from an actional sense of identity (pp. 50-53).



For learners to enact *this* aesthetic education, all Jacotot needed was a ‘book’ and the ‘aesthetic cut’ that divided his students from his own knowledge (of ignorance). So staged - equidistantly - the book was an affordance of equality. As I’ll mis/appropriate this word, an *affordance* is anything - interface, screen, book, image-text, gizmo - that obtains its (unstable, transitory, or relational) ‘identity’ in relation to the way it is being utilized - in relation to the manner it is being (mis)appropriated, pirated, improvised upon, or energetically pushed to whatever uses that were not necessarily set forth (intended) in the instruction manual.

An affordance of equality - or of play - can be seen as an improvisational (any)thing that connects performance to aptitude, while throwing into question the gap separating ‘child’s play’ from an ‘official’ competency. If the book could have been any book, then what counts is not the origin or model purpose of the affordance (what’s in the explicator’s manual), but the taking of it by anyone to any competent occasion or (unlikely) end.

If Illich coined the term ‘tools of conviviality’ to mean non-technocratic modes of community self-determination (*vis-à-vis* whatever available tools persons and groups materially interact with or modify to their own unschooled purposes), an affordance of equality is vehicle of capacity that allows learners to ‘set up’ or ‘set out’, sans explicative scaffolding. And if Brecht coined the term *Umfunktionierung* (refunctioning) as the re-appropriation of bourgeois theater in the service of shifting spectators toward a common ‘critical consciousness’, then an affordance of equality/play is a common tool that is refunctioned *by the person* who is engaged with it, the person who makes or shifts their *own* distance through it.

If somebody makes or does as an artist (too), or thinks as a thinker (too), there can't be any of those dialectically-staged crises, nor any of those momentary dissonances devised by educational constructivists who, true to their methods, are always *there* - ready to resolve an artful vertigo into the wider grammar of the master's score. What defines competence *before* performance (i.e., school logic) is that each planned dissonance is, in a sense, a prelude for the next one. And this sequences the holding pattern (stultification) where a talent to do, try on, or try out is contained.

Explication not only requires being drawn into the fractionally-plotted intrigues of the teacher, it defines an exclusionary distribution of talents where what one learns *first* is to count oneself among the disqualified, untalented, unable. As for the musical metaphor above, this was also the less-than-metaphorical musical method that showed me that we could not 'really' play, that there was a telescoping echelon of levels, skill-sets, abilities, and powers to which I/we would never ascend (in or outside of the school). Though not officially stated in the manifesto of our teachers, the lesson of learning 'an art' in this progressive way was not only that 'Art' was not for us, but that the kind of play or pleasure associated with *doing* art(istically) was also not for us, too.

As Jacotot argues, what the 'reasoned progression' of talent or knowledge sequences out is a *mutilation* - an eternal return of stultifying self-disqualifications. And this kind of mutilation is, arguably, front-loaded into categories determinative of 'what counts most' in schools, what's evaluable - stages, benchmarks, the uniform display of some competency (by time-variable  $x$ ), or outcomes like so-called technical mastery. Such categories and outcomes first narrow the field of play, and of who can play, and then trade the play of anyone - the possibility of anyone creatively playing - for

yardsticks of quality or correctness (that is to say, the *sameness* of the performance of the intelligence, or of what an identifiable body is estimated to do *next*).

Contrast this with the less polished methodology of my old bass instructor circa 1982, a jazz musician who was frequently high (it seemed) and who obliged me to play charts out of his own ensemble's playlist (while he, not insignificantly, indulged himself by playing along on his new keyboard). One could argue that he learned the piano at my expense (and I was always a bit suspicious about the fun *he* was having). On the other hand, by being pedagogically 'on drugs', by placing a score between us as 'groping' equals, and then by simply muttering *go (improvise)* - we *both* eluded the ennui of mutually-assured infantilization. Along the way, I discovered that a screw up - a chance accidental - or a breakdown in tempo was, as it were, no biggee, sometimes more than all right. I also discovered that *one single note* - even the wrong one, a 'dirty one' - auratically breathed, painted, or bodied forth with 'attention' was also quite more than enough. If Adorno (1967) hears the machinery of standardization, the rattle of slave ships, and 'laments of unfreedom' behind the 'eunuch-like' facade of jazz, I had, in feverishly winging it, no inkling of what 'inner logic' he was, exactly, mourning over.<sup>21</sup>

Besides sounding like the kind of smoky jazz-wisdom my instructor might have uttered, Jacotot's 'first principle of universal teaching' is that 'everything is in everything'. What this means is that the 'one single note' is not a formative increment in the path of echelons, but is a self-sufficient facet in a 'tautology of power...All knowledge of oneself as an intelligence is in the mastery of a book, a chapter, a sentence,

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<sup>21</sup> Adorno (1967): 'Anyone who mistakes a triad studded with "dirty notes" for atonality has already capitulated to barbarism' (p. 127).

a word [or a single musical note]...One begins with the text [/score or affordance] and not with grammar, with entire words and not with syllables... this is what opens the way to all adventure' (IS, 26-27).

Anything can be taken as an affordance of equality - from a lithographer's press (IS) to a simple recording device, or a computer loaded with sound, film, or image-editing software: it can be a vehicle for *scrying* distances (for seeing *this*) or a medium for making *that*, as well as any 'gizmo' for creatively (re)editing, remediating, or variously (multi-modally) re-constellating what one sees, reads, or touches with what one has captured or recorded.

While there is no 'right' medium, there are affordances - basically, enchanted 'toys' (e.g., a LOMO, Theremin, Kaossilator, Tenori-On) - that generously permit anyone at all to compose art for real, to say 'me, too'. Like workers who compose poetry before they know how to write, one begins competently and goes from there.

On the other hand, there is no shortage of examples of people who take the same approach to traditional instruments by, among other things, 'preparing' them into new forms or by exploring 'extended techniques', by coming up with novel tuning systems, or by integrating chance procedures and found/sound elements, as well as interlacing everyday sounds (from industrial clamor to sweetly-refunctioned music boxes to emancipated Muzak) into what they were making-exploring. 'Wanting was all that was necessary for doing', and doing meant, to some extent, ignoring accepted categories/conventions about 'what counts' as quality, what's 'noise' and what's not, and where - or with what medium - it's smart to 'begin'. And as film-maker Jonas Mekas

(2005) makes intelligible through his own use of the camera, there's nothing too brief or too incidental, no idiom too everyday, that can't - on the fly - be made translatable into a serious form/moment of creative activity. What makes a thing an affordance of equality - like Mekas' generous Bolex - is that anyone just 'takes' it (whether they can or cannot), expropriating the gizmo or the medium from the province of disciplinary expertise, or whatever territory of sound methodology (pedagogy).

Ignorance of - or indifference to - all of those 'sound' forms allowed these actors to explore the fullness of present capacities, to rigorously experiment *within* trajectories of serious action, imitation, invention, (multi-modal) remediation. Such 'acts' signal a mode of engagement where a 'want' connects up with an aesthetic interface, where an affordance of play opens onto a competent performance - a performance 'the outcome of which is unknown'. The further point being, a lot of the players I'm thinking of eventually learned how to play - in the most 'official' sense of the word - but not until long after they were *already* competently playing.

If on this path the distance is the learner's own, then the learner is at every point coeval with aptitude - and playing the same game as the master. Already 'doing it' implies already wanting. But it also implies performatively dis-identifying with one's expected pedagogical place in the institutions of half-baked making. And this updates a 'reflexive view of agency' in the key of 'child's play', a way a doing that happens despite - or in ignorance of - all initiatory practices and by-degree systems. One inhabits, even if for a moment, a classless body, an egalitarian community. One communicates as an artist, as one 'who believes' their thoughts are 'communicable' and their 'emotions shareable'

(IS, 65), their creative gestures part of a common world of action and argument (SP, 49-51).

As child's play, what a musical artist or illiterate poet does is what all children do when they 'figure out' their first language: 'the words the child learns best, those whose meaning he fathoms best, those he best makes his own through his own usage, are those he learns without a master, well before any master explicator' (IS, 5). In 'the act' is where intelligence lies, in the immanent 'flux and reflux of perpetual improvisation' (IS, 64). As Jacotot-Rancière punctuate this, understanding 'is the work of the will' (IS, 57), and 'the virtue of our intelligence is less in knowing than in doing. Knowing is nothing, doing is everything' (IS, 65).

## **(5) Two Worlds: The Critical Logic & the Logic Creative Capacity**

### **Literary Metaphors & Material Paths**

In *Ideology*, Terry Eagleton (1991) suggests that oppression 'is a normative concept: someone is being oppressed not simply if they drag out a wretched existence, but if certain *creative capacities* they could feasibly realize are being actively thwarted' (p. 207). In Eagleton's story of ideology, he makes his point about 'thwarted capacities' by using the metaphor of a galley slave - a chained body whose 'hands' can only row and whose 'look' is confined to the 'oars' in front of him. As Eagleton assures us, the eyes (vision) and the hands (activity) of the slave confirm one another, corroborate one and the same 'reality', thus forming a closed-circuit that defines and redefines the place-identity of the 'rower' (and thus the constrained horizons of the rower's creative capacities). The galley slave *inhabits* the practice of (self)domination, embodies it without 'remainder', which is to say, there is no visible otherwise or imaginable 'outside' to the situation the slave so 'naturally' occupies. The galley appears necessary, inexorable (even if it is not). By just doing this 'one thing' - manual labor - the slave is, as it were, ideologically trapped in a 'reified' order of things where social function and identity/occupation are circularly reiterated by the seeable, the sayable, and the doable. As Eagleton stages the scene, 'sitting for fifteen hours a day in the third row from the front is what [the slave's]

ideological opinions are *about*. What he says is about what he does; and what he does is the reason for what he says' (p. 208).

Eagleton's narrative exemplifies what Rancière calls a 'circle' of entrapment (as conceived of by certain brands of socio-critical science). The 'slave' sees, does, and lives out the singular and undivided reality of 'the third row from the front'. In turn, what the slave needs (in order to get out of the perfect circle) is the critical distance to sense, imagine, conceptualize, and discursively reframe a world that is different from, and opposed to, the one he sensibly inhabits: he needs a liberatory 'view' - a 'shock' or a 'critique' - that, as Eagleton suggests, will most likely 'spring from' an exterior agent: in this case, the 'League of Escaped Galley Slaves'.

As a brief aside, *critique* is a term that, as Seyla Benhabib (1986) reminds us, stems from the Greek word for both *division* and *decision* (Judgment), as well as from the word for 'crisis', where *crisis* itself refers to pathology, the 'stage of a disease...the healing or worsening of the patient' (p. 19). In a 'critical condition', then, Eagleton's galley rower needs to be 'divided' from the singular, seemingly inexorable (ideological) reality he inhabits - and critically divided precisely by those who both stand and 'think' (judge) outside of that reality, those who have transcended 'entrapment' and understand the truth that lies behind the false appearance of things.

While very logical, implicit in this critical logic of domination-and-deliverance is the same soteriological logic that underlies explication: a distribution of the sensible that proceeds by dividing the world into two, into those who know and those who don't, into those who *know how* to know and those who don't. Furthermore, it is only those who



know, those who stand outside the galley of the slave, who are in the position to intervene, to critically *split* the connection between what the slave's hands do and what the eyes (might) see. The league of 'the escaped' thus return to the site of domination in order to deliver those still trapped in the 'field' of oppression or sensibly 'submerged' in ideology. Critical 'division' means critical 'distance' - and in this case, the distance to be attained is an 'exterior' point that is both established and mediated by the League. Coming to understand the situation (i.e., via demystification) means that one is *then* in the position to transform the situation.

What Rancière suggests, however, is that this long-held cause-and-effect relation between critical understanding and emancipation may be a specious one. More than that, for Rancière, the emancipatory logic of deliverance (conscientization) always risks thwarting those same creative capacities of which Eagleton speaks, transforming emancipation into its opposite by attributing incapacity to the so-called 'slave'. As mastery/transcendence is conferred to those of science and the critical disciplines, entrapment is attributed to an ignorant *other* - as the essential point of departure to respond to and act upon: and this defines the pedagogical 'distance' to progressively abolish.

Eagleton's slave-ship metaphor - which is the same one that Adorno and Horkheimer use in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to divide humanity in two based on unequal capacities to sensuously enjoy (a distribution of the sensible) - this metaphor constructs not simply an *economic* landscape of exploited slaves and bourgeois masters, but also maps out an inegalitarian *intellectual* and *aesthetic* order of 'slaves' and 'escaped slaves' (yet another intellectual distribution of mastery and servitude that is stacked upon

the former *economic* distribution). In this configuration, the ‘escaped’ act upon the ‘creatively thwarted’, those bodies which are ideologically locked in a closed-circuit that links what the *hands do* to what the *gaze can see*.

One obvious problem with Eagleton’s theory of ideology is the metaphor he uses to stage the scene itself. What is perhaps less obvious, however, is how ‘metaphors’ become real and solid things, vehicles for dicing up sensible realities, for positioning different actors in different a parts of a socio-pedagogical field. Moreover, Eagleton’s metaphor also assumes the slave can’t use them - metaphors<sup>22</sup> - to re/story their own situation. As an art of distance, the escaped ‘mediate’ the ‘way out’ of a galley (for those more literal-minded bodies in the rower’s seats). Like the pedagogical fiction - and not unlike Adorno and Horkheimer’s own story of domination - the metaphor of the galley slave artfully sheers the world in half, binding one part of the community to ‘thwarted capacities’, and thus to endlessly reproducible relations of dependence (i.e., being unthwarted).

If a distribution of the sensible can be seen as a ‘sensory fabric’ that defines self-evident ways of being together or apart (in relation to perceptible experience and positions of speech and action), in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* the division in question is not simply reducible to the material-economic situation of being a manual rower. Compounding this one form economic exploitation, the rower, by virtue of just doing this ‘one thing’ (for fifteen hours a day), also lacks the aesthetic and intellectual aptitudes to conceive of a world that is different than the one he so seamlessly inhabits. While the

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<sup>22</sup> Metaphor as an ‘operation is itself a displacement producing new figurations (the Greek *metaphora* means both “metaphor” and “transport” or “movement”)’ (Robertson, et. al., 1994, p. 2).

rowers row in, or for, the marketplace, it's only Ulysses, the ship-master, who is in the position to truly 'feel', to take pleasure in the 'songs' of the sensible and, by implication, exercise his own creative capacities. As with Eagleton's parable, an economic position determines the cultural-aesthetic limits of what is visible, what kinds of vital pleasures might be felt (by whom), and what kind of incandescent experiences, passions, or performances might be put into play.

Aesthetic inequality - the *incapacity* to 'lift' one's gaze or 'aestheticize' one's world - is bound to an economic location (material dispossession). The oppressed are unable to lift their gazes, make metaphors, tell stories, or simply perform in ways that could break the circuit that binds what one *sees* to what one *says* and what one can *do*. As a stacked distribution of the sensible, Rancière argues that one material-economic stacking of the cards against one part of community is, on another level, compounded by the aesthetico-cognitive wealth of the 'so-called critical logic'. In this logic, the critical science becomes an epistemological 'double' to material oligarchies (ES, 48).

### **Skeptrons of Science: Masters of Space & Time**

Looking beyond simple 'slave-ship' metaphors, what are the implications of these distribution(s) of the sensible? In Rancière's story, Bourdieu and Althusser paradigmatically define a double-bind inherent in the critical tradition, even if they construct their double-binds differently. Below, I'd like to address the forms of these binds take in order to contrast the critical logic with a logic of (creative) capacity. Next, I'll consider the educational implications of this discussion by looking at the relation between *The Nights of Labor* and a contemporary 'student' art collective, K.O.S. (and

thus examine how K.O.S. activities enact *redistributions* of the sensible in consonance with Jacotot's logic of creative capacity).

Rancière argues that Althusser exemplifies a general orientation to deliverance that threads indefinite postponement into the very warp-and-woof of critical-liberational thinking itself. Simply put, Althusser's distinction between science and ideology (where ideology, here, is defined as pretty much everything that is not 'science') inscribes a necessary dependence upon the science to bridge the gap between what is ideological and what is not (Eagleton, 1991, p. 137). It's not that an über-theorist, or even Althusser himself, can somehow stand outside of the ideological, or stand outside of what Althusser calls an 'unconscious problematic' (the historical structures that underpin and condition all possible thought/speech at a given historical moment) - but rather that the critico-interpretive science offers the disciplinary models, the tools, and the vantage points to retroactively judge: the method thus defines a cutting-edge place (for the scientist) to understand what could *not* have been understood, uttered, thought, or even 'asked' *the moment before*.

Using Jacotot's terminology, Althusser draws a rigorous line between uncommon science and the place of ordinary ignorance (doxa). And as with Eagleton's *Association of The Escaped*, for Althusser, it is only the science that moves ahead (to explain, as it were, what just happened). While no one transcends the 'unconscious problematic' of any given historical moment, the science is privileged with looking back in order to reveal what was ideologically hidden to all. With this vanguard position, only the science is capable of critically reading the signs of history - the causative forms and objective social structures - that condition events, words, and processes. Appearance - and by this

Rancière means the perceptible material of a shared sensory world - is thus made equivalent with ideology, with that which has not *yet* been sorted out by the critical disciplines. This in turn implies that a 'common' appearance or 'shared sensible' is defined as an object of *latent* or *unspoken* meaning that can only be explained by scientist who, by virtue of possessing the proper interpretive protocols, is always one step ahead.

Rancière calls Althusser's method of interpretation 'symptomal reading'. In this method of reading the social and the historical, the everyday appearance is, through the disciplinary lens of science, reframed as a great 'symptom', the 'manifest content' of a great social-symbolic text that only the science can decode. From the one-step-ahead (analytical) vantage point, the critical science can then interpret and unmask the manifest symptoms for a community (of ignorance) that was itself the source of those symptoms, a community living and practicing on the (always opaquely deceptive) surface of the ideological everyday. And this means that peoples' actions, descriptions of things, and political enunciations are, in the first instance, 'symptomatic'. Acts, events, and the performances of others are *incomplete*, as it were, until the science decodes and speaks for them. *Now*, the scientist can complete the social text, can decode and explicate the real social meanings, hidden structures, or historical significances of acts, events, and utterances.

As Jacotot argues, the explicator obtains his authority by virtue of his temporal position. In explication, there is always the 'not yet' - the mechanism of delay - that determines the set-back: 'a little later'; 'a few more explanations and you will see the light'. Like the explicator's 'book', Althusser's book 'is never whole, the lesson is never finished' - and precisely because latency is built into the method and, consequently, there

is always the *pending* explanation. In short, Althusser's science defines the indefinite postponement of emancipation, as well as an infinite deference to a future science. In cinematic terms, critical science is bestowed with the explanatory power of the flashback, where the 'community of ignorance' is converted into a hieroglyph for the science to hieratically interpret. In charge of the flashback, the scientist tells the actors what they *could not have known* when they actually spoke, acted, or did (since they were, at the time, ensconced in their 'unconscious problematic', the hidden ideological structure determining their horizon of possible speech, thinking, action).

As an interpretive method, a few parallels with psychoanalysis can be made, and here I'll stress not only the method of interpretation, but the relation between the analyst and the patient that this method puts into play. By obtaining a privileged mastery or uncommon method *over* the common 'appearance' of things, and of grasping what was 'hidden' in the 'symptom', Althusser arrogates to science the unique capacity to stand outside of the 'police'<sup>23</sup> machinery that 'calls' subjects to identity, order, social function. As with psychoanalysis, the science is *always already* in the position to read the manifest content of events, spectacular fantasies, or ordinary speech, as well as all those telling 'silences' indicative of what is repressed, unconscious, or not *yet* visible. In this sense, the everyday enunciations of actors could be read as the enounced of repressed or invisible materials, where the speech/acts of the actor becomes a kind of textual-symbolic artefact that's blind to its own determining mechanisms.

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<sup>23</sup> Althusser's police 'apparatus' (which 'calls' social objects - people - into ideological systems beyond their control) is different than Rancière's notion of police (which says, 'there is nothing to see here').

In the same way an analyst might read the speech, elisions and silences of the patient for latent meaning, Althusser's 'symptomal reading' presupposes 'oversight' in community, where this oversight is not a 'matter of myopia, or an individual failing. It is a property itself of the field of the visible' (FW, 132). Althusser assigns science the ability to not just read or decode what is unspoken or yet still 'missing' in the historical moments where events and enunciations manifest themselves. More than that, Althusser's 'symptomal reading' basically defines community as a community of 'oversight', which is to say, as 'an enormous reserve of answers to bad questions, waiting for good questions' (FW, 133). In charge of the good questions, the scientist gets the last word, and one 'follows a master with whom [one] will never catch up' (IS, 21). This permits the science to extend, indefinitely, the telescoping power of its hermeneutical-cinematic flashbacks, its speech-recapturing distribution of the sensible.

Someone speaks; the analyst says: *There is illness*; the 'patient' replies, *I'm not sick*; the analyst explains: *Saying you're 'not sick' is a symptom of the illness*. Returning to metaphors of ill-feeling, Eagleton (1991) suggests that ideology can be understood as the 'psychopathology of everyday life, a system of distortions so pervasive that it cancels all the way through and presents every appearance of normality' (p. 136). But a 'system of distortions' (unless it goes all the way down, thus rendering the term ideology itself an entirely vacant or a pointless one) has to invoke a way of reading appearances that privileges positions and/or disciplines for cracking the code, for speaking for what's hieroglyphic, for mastering the explanatory (causal) 'substratum'. As Appel (1998) suggests, 'whether it is made explicit in each instance, ideology critique is underpinned by a notion of false consciousness...Believing in false consciousness assumes the

existence, or at least the possibility of, a true consciousness' (p. 41). Critique, in the 'pathological' sense of the word, thus pivots upon this key relationship between the apparent and the hidden, conferring legitimacy to the healing critic, and (self)delusion to those who only express symptoms, are only capable of expressing mere 'signs' to be explained or completed by the (social, hermeneutical, or psychoanalytic) science.

The crucial point, though, is that ideology/spectacle critique and psychoanalysis meet up again precisely where the 'object' of analysis (the patient) must *concede capacity* to the science and its institutional spokespersons. What Santner (1996) calls the 'passions of psychoanalysis' are more than just the science's own voluptuous pleasure in decoding symptoms and unveiling their hidden (causative/repressed) structures and 'deep' sources. What complicates the analyst's passion is that, for the critical analysis to work therapeutically, the commitment (i.e., belief) of the patient is also required, which means the patient (or the learner) must remove him or herself from a 'circle of power' and confer 'capacity' to the interpretive authority (to heal, or to unveil what is hidden in the manifest content, and/or to 'entrain' the other into the same emancipatory discourse-method). To 'get well', as it were, the patient has to first invest 'faith in' and 'transfer credit' to the analyst - who is the 'spokesperson' for the science/discipline (p. 25). In what is tantamount to stultification, the patient (learner) must 'believe' that the science/spokesperson can interpret symptoms or speech-events better than the patient can, which amounts to 'the authorization of the analyst's power' (p. 25). Inversely, this implies divestiture in the patient's (or the learner's) own capacity (self-reflexive agency) to frame meanings or to intervene in the symbolic order of things. In 'the passions' of psychoanalysis, there has to be an 'investiture' in the master-healer, who is an 'envoy' for



the institution, and who is now understood (by the patient) as an accredited (hieratic-hermeneutical) guide through an unruly ‘forest of signs and symbols’. As for the terms of the divestiture, every healer-educator-analyst wields, in Bourdieu’s words, a *skeptron* of power, a scepter - a kind of transmuter (power-pack) - which, in the hands of those ‘certified’ to hold it, empowers them to speak with authority, while also drawing relational (status) positions that ‘legitimately’ installs explication’s distribution, its orders of professional mastery and (dis)qualification.

This legitimation of (explicative) authority is, as Santner further suggests, a form of ‘performative magic’ which consecrates the bearer of the ‘skeptron’ as an ‘embodiment’ of institutional power and disciplinary expertise, even though the healer-analyst-educator is only, as Bourdieu puts it, just an arbitrary relay point, ‘an imposter endowed with a skeptron’ (Bourdieu, cited in Santner, 1996, p. 27). But because Bourdieu seems to be enamored with perfect - if not utterly paranoiac - circles of (institutional) power, he further argues that ordinary people can’t produce their ‘own private skeptrons’ (p. 26). That is to say, without ‘magical’ legitimation or recognizably sanctioned qualifications, ordinary speakers remain invisible. Without a skeptron, the invisible can’t be seen or heard as viable (or certifiable) agents: they remain disqualified, or are perceived as makers of ‘noise’.

That said, and as a brief personal aside, I would submit that skeptrons - as the fictions Bourdieu says they are - don’t seem to be as magically monolithic or seamlessly mystifying as Bourdieu assures his readers. As evidenced in my first chapter, I - as a certified educator - have had the chance to performatively wield the skeptron on numerous occasions, and in my case, it usually flopped over in my hands like a dead

trout, eliciting not a whole ton of 'faith or credit' from anyone in the classroom, myself included.



Figure 17. More Placemats from *In the Faculty Room*

Figure 18. Pictures of My TV Set (3)





Skeptrons aside, Merleau-Ponty (1968) sums up this entire ‘distribution of the sensible’ quite magically when he says that there are modes of science that ‘trap’ people from the get go. By this, he means there is a ‘spell’ cast by science that tells those of non-science that ‘things have *another sense* than the one we are in a position to recognize in them’ (p.93-94). While Merleau-Ponty is, in this case, referring to ‘dialectics’, the trap is essentially transposable: it’s the same strategic pact that defines any mode of ‘social pedagogization’, any distribution of the sensible that, in assuring one part of the community they are ‘out of position’ to apprehend, know or act, simultaneously elevates and certifies another part of community to explanatory qualification (or epistemocracy). What is for Merleau-Ponty the ‘spell’ of a science with its ‘own rationality’ (a ‘sly power behind our back’ that ‘authorizes the determination of the ineluctable’) (p. 94) is, for Jacotot, just a ‘story’, a ‘conception of the world’, a ‘social fiction’ that tautologically divides the world in two.

For Althusser, the fold is temporal: there is always one more increment in the path or a lesson ‘up the master’s sleeve’ that moves the drama forward, reinstating both the gap and the (dis)investiture that goes with it. In Bourdieu’s own system, however, the aesthetic form used by social science is not a temporal spell but a spatial (sympathetic) magic: a way of laying out an all-embracing social diagram that only the science can see and, to that extent, unveil to bodies composed-caught within internal workings of the social diagram. Instead of time-lags, sociology explicates the workings of domination in terms of social architectures and spatial mappings. As an alchemist might say, as it is above, so it is below. Thus, from ‘above’, an exterior vantage, the science identifies bodies, maps them, and pins down the ‘Who’s who’ of the social order (DW), explaining

why one body is inexorably 'here' (rowing) rather than 'there' (on deck, listening to, or creatively making, siren songs). Next, the social science explains why situated bodies always misrecognize (in their everyday experiences and personal choices) the real systemic reasons for being/choosing a 'here' or a 'there' in the social order: they appear to be drugged. In short, this suggests (or demands) that people are trapped - but also trapped in such a way as to be without recourse to unprogrammed movements. As with the ideal of the Platonic/ethical regime, bodies can't *unpin themselves* from a 'given' social location or corresponding identity/function on the map. Describing a yet *more* 'perfect circle', people are dominated because they don't understand, and they don't understand because they are dominated (PP, JR).

If that's a zero-sum game, things are all the more dystopic, architecturally-speaking, when the distributive logic(s) of *Reproduction* and *Distinction* are 'stacked' upon one another. Unlike Eagleton's system of escape, the dominated can't even be 'delivered' by critical science (the League of the Escaped) because the dominant institutions (like schools and museums) quietly force the dominated to remove themselves from the very places of power, capacity, and understanding (demystification). Here, the distribution that divides the world in two and keeps the dominated in their place (below deck) is a seamless machine, a socio-institutional mechanics, which remains 'necessarily misrecognized' by every social actor, that is, every actor who has not been liberated by the science. Yet the people 'below deck' (who need the critical healer the most) are those types of bodies who don't have the faculties, and are not predisposed, to get the master's code, teach themselves, or even read 'the map' he has sutured them into.

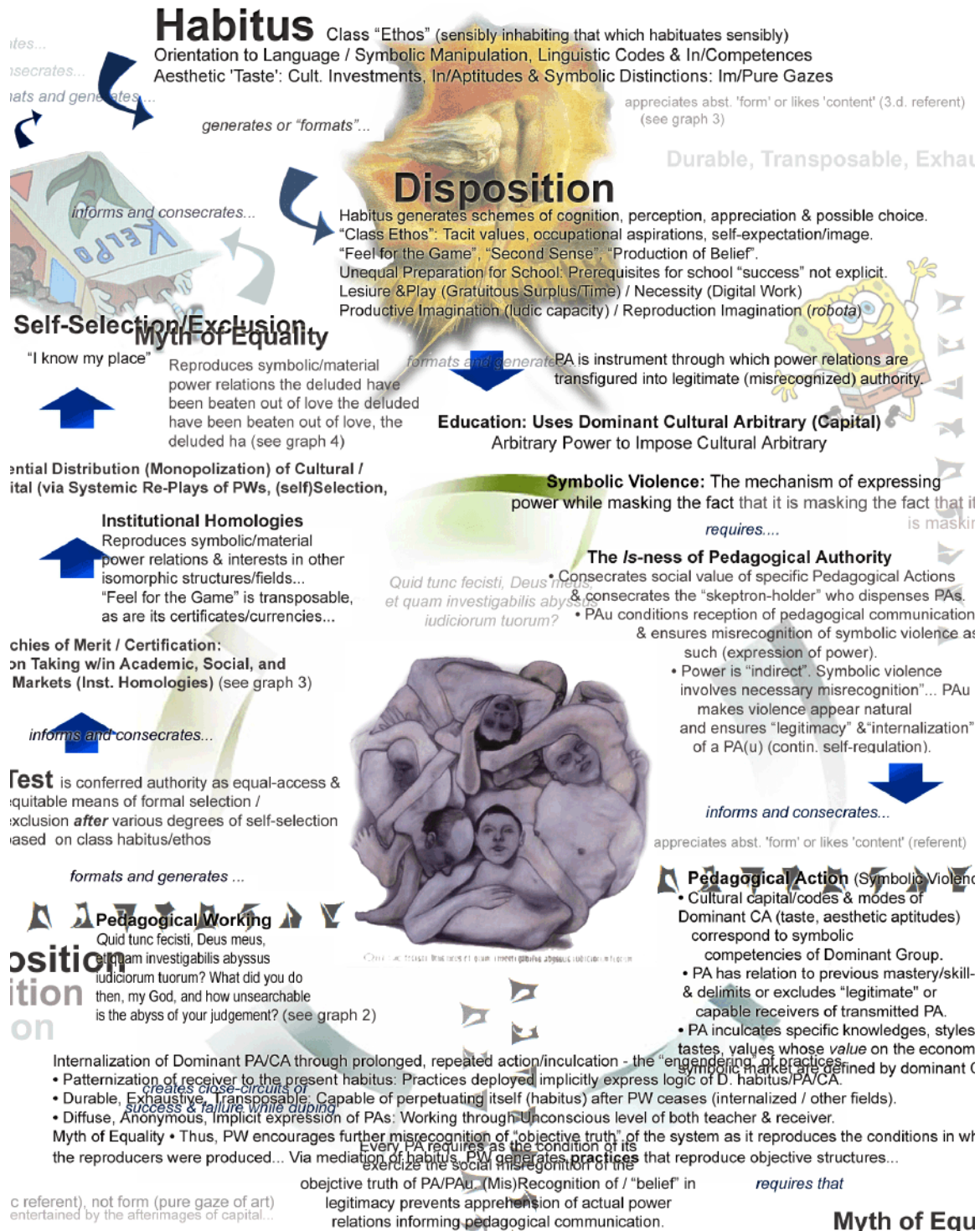


Figure 19. Wheel of Suppliants<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Centrepiece, *Wheel of Suppliants*, James Ciatko, 2001

As a progressive answer to this ‘nihilistic’ diagram, social science can certainly ‘help’ (e.g., in educational institutions) by classifying the unequal, and by adapting symbolic codes/curricula and methods to meet the ‘needs’ of those defined by ‘lack’, and by making the ‘pedagogical actions’ (PA) of learning (the modes and codes of address) ‘explicit’ to the addressee. Different codes or mediational (aesthetic) forms can be made to conform to the specific cultural capital of different learners (addressees) who are shaped by different class home-worlds (habitus), and their different (identity-defining) needs/lacks. As a response to inequality, one addresses known deficits, soliciting different learners in their unequal-different locations-conditions within the social field by using different perceptible materials. In the service of redressing social inequality, the progressive solution to the nihilistic diagram ensures a ‘distribution of the sensible’ that is itself a distribution of unequal forms, codes, and places.

The starting point, for Bourdieu, can be stated simply: the poor can’t play, can’t play ‘the game’, and can’t play with the artistic codes or the plastic/aesthetic forms of the more fortunate sensible. What Bourdieu calls the ‘myth of equality’ is the myth that the disadvantaged are able, are possibly capable. As for the solution, in the service of making the educational codes (PA) ‘explicit’ to disadvantaged receivers in their ‘place’, the ‘instruction’ in turn ‘chases away the extravagant aspirations’ of learners, the passions or glimpses of other worlds that the ‘schoolchild might take back to [transform] life conditions’ (IS, 35). Here, if the ‘progressive’ response to inequality is built upon the sociological fatalism that argues that the democratic school is part of a ‘fraudulent regime which presumes that luxury is a possibility for the poor’, then the progressive solution also assumes that ‘equality’ is an illusion: ‘equality is a myth’ (ideology) that helps

legitimate both symbolic violence and the poor's institutional 'self-removal', as well as the misrecognition of 'real' causes for one's choices. But the 'myth of equality' also says that the poor can't (yet) creatively play with signs, symbols, or forms (SP, 55), can't be other than who they 'are', and do not have at their disposal the means and/or affordances for communicating in common, or on an equal footing.

In the progressive solution there is, then, a 'good faith' stacking of deficits where 'the consciousness of what a [learner] does is drawn from a science that is not his own [and] the consciousness of what he is leads him back to doing nothing other than his own task' (IS, 35). Back to the galley. At this juncture, 'the nihilistic vision of school as a form of reproduction of inequality and the progressive vision of schooling as an instrument for reducing inequalities concur in their effects as they do in their principle: both start with inequality and end up with inequality' (SP, 54).

As for the depth of the 'nihilistic vision', if domination could be compared with hunger, Bourdieu's science offers a feast of ludic pleasures to those who are already satiated, to those who are predisposed to the 'gratuitous', to leisure (time), to playing with images, signs, sounds, and selves. On one hand, for those who are too close to 'necessity' - consigned to doing their 'one thing' (work) - this community walks blindly past the banquets of science and art, assured by the unreadable-invisible symbols on the association's door that the association's extravagant passions are not for them. At the same time, the dominated can't 'aspire', can't spontaneously set up or eagerly set out because one's destiny, and one's horizon of in/capacity, is prefigured in advance by social location (the galley) and its corresponding aesthetic forms of conditioning (i.e., sensibly inhabiting that which habituates sensibly). What one does and sees is who one is



and who one is destined to be. That's why they can't read the 'signs' on the institution's door in the first place: its coding is determined by a different habitus.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Bourdieu (1993) argues that the fortunate habitus conditions certain people's gazes to appreciate more difficult 'forms' while the working habitus conditions people to like more digestible 'contents'. The pure gaze fits with dominant cultural institutions; the other gaze (which can't receive the dominant cultural arbitrary) 'opts out', says, 'not for me'. Practically speaking, this means that if, perchance, the galley slave (or the floor layer) were to gaze up from his oars and see a  $\square$  sign, or even the trace of an imaginative/creative otherwise, the  $\square$  sign itself (creative play) is not readable or visible to the worker or the lowly-placed: the  $\square$  sign is only visible-readable to the ludic/pure gaze of Ulysses (who, wearing the captain's hat, is already up playing on deck, as it were, conducting the Sirens with his skeptron). Or as Adorno suggests, the rowers are so fully bound to the task of 'self-preservation' that they do not have means, time, or 'sensuous access' to the types of vital experiences their labors in fact provides for the privileged.

This is a formula for being Sponge-Bobbed twice over. First, people inherit and then reproduce the 'dispositions', 'tastes', and 'symbolic' tools of their homes, the ethos that they always already find themselves in. Second, because certain forms of community don't have the dispositions and symbolic aptitudes of the privileged classes, they can't even get delivered by the science, science's particular mode of address, or have access to 'authentic' sensuous experiences. Whether in schools or art-worlds, locatable persons spontaneously adhere to the hidden rules of the game (i.e., 'reproduction') without any actual awareness of the game or the knowledge of its 'durable and transposable' rules.

Incorporated in this systematic (super-isomorphic) way, galley bodies inhabit their (rowing) ranks and functions in the social order, while ‘necessarily misrecognizing’ the reasons for what they do or say, what they symbolically invest in or ‘opt out’ of. And along the lines of the psychoanalytic magic, peoples’ actions are translated into ‘symptoms’ for the science to explain from an epistemic exteriority, while ensuring, at the same time, the secure status of science because the lowly-placed, those of non-science, will never be able to ‘teach themselves’ (Ross, 1991), never ‘constitute themselves’ as ‘thinking beings’ (PP), or somehow generate their own private skeptrons (hearable voices, self-constitutive agencies, or out-of-place performances).

In Althusser’s case, peoples’ compliance to ideological apparatuses observes the logic of a spectacular ‘banking education’ machine that calls ‘subjects’ to identity and function, to a pre-existing ideological structure that make the ‘subject’ an systemic effect of ideology. Althusser says that ‘the practical telecommunication of hailings hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed’ (Althusser, cited in Eagleton, 1991, p. 145).

For Bourdieu, the system does not ‘call’ people telecommunicationally because one’s habitus determines the im/possibility of even receiving, expressing, or investing in certain types of codes, images, and discursive-aesthetic forms. One is shaped (entrained in advance) simply by virtue of one’s proximal environment (one’s place in the social diagram) where one’s place is *feelingly* embodied as ‘home’. (Not even the body, as a resistant ‘piece’ of ‘nature’, as Adorno called it, can resist or move.). The crucial point is that material-economic and cultural-aesthetic circuits fold into on another, ensuring that one ‘stays in place’. As a perfect circle - *sans* circuit-breaker - being in (or outside of) the

rowers galley (or the art gallery) is a ‘feel for the game’, the embodied, unspoken, and transposable rules<sup>25</sup> of which remain necessarily unrecognized to all but the sociological mapmakers (who carry the biggest skeptrons of them all).



Figure 20. Placemant

### **Circuit Breaking: The Egalitarian Logic of Capacity**

By implicitly assuming slave bodies, colonized minds, or media-addled desires and identifications, critical practices may implicitly - or explicitly - reproduce colonial

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<sup>25</sup> One might say, using Foucault's terms, that Bourdieu's perfect circuit is defined by the harmonic convergence of discursive practices (symbolic-linguistic) and non-discursive practices (embodied, inhabited, felt practice).

relations of intellectual mastery (*ad infinitum*). As knowledgeable and compassionate as an explicator may be, if explicators need inequality, then it might also be said that emancipators need the ‘thwarted’. Rancière suggests that those of ‘good faith’ usually make the best explicators: and the more ‘enlightened’ the master is, the ‘more evident he finds the difference between his knowledge and the ignorance of the ignorant ones...the difference between groping blindly and searching methodically’ (IS, 7).

In terms of these structures that reinvent relations of mastery and servitude, it might be suggested that the educational master projects ignorance onto the *other* (the novice) in order to compulsively abolish what the master fears most, or wishes to repress, about him or herself: the master’s repressed anxiety about his own ‘ignorance’, the epistemic night-terror of mastery uncrowned, or the trauma of confronting the fact that the rigorous systems of mastery from which the master obtains authority is founded upon roiling elements that the master can’t control. As Shaviro (1990) gets at this object of anxiety, any system of mastery, ‘any system of calculation and regulation’, is always ‘dependant upon forces and movements which cannot themselves be calculated and regulated, or represented within it’ (p. 46). What Jacotot calls explication’s ‘conception of the world’ is, in this sense, a storyline that attempts to secure mastery’s position of control over precisely that which it can’t represent and regulate. Okay, while this little (quasi-psychoanalytic) detour, here, risks establishing another order of mystification and explication, it is nevertheless kind of interesting - fun even - to entertain the possibility that the incapacity of the other is, from the standpoint of pedagogy/teaching, in fact ‘a projection of one’s own suppressed or excluded side, one’s unaccepted features’ (Szkudlarek, 1994, p. 61). One thus ‘deals’ with one’s unaccepted - or unperfected -

features by *taking it out*, as it were, on the Other (e.g., through some dialectic of enlightenment). Still, this little argument only inverts one distribution of the sensible by naming another superior vantage to explain to the ‘other’: *this* time it is the ‘unconscious exclusions’ and ‘anxieties’ of the master/educator which are framed as pathological symptoms to unveil to *that* ‘idiot’. And this just (again) passes the skeptron, so to speak, recasting the master as mystified, the subject with the ‘lack’ to be abolished, edified, or ameliorated.

Obviously, this game of insufficiency, symptomology, and interpretative unveiling can be played out indefinitely. Moreover, the (ever-reversible) dialectic between ‘slave’ and ‘escaped slave’ always restages a new order of mastery, servitude, and ‘double-lack’, a new workshop of emancipation, and therefore a re/newed distance to be (mediationally) reduced for the other. As Rancière describes this master-slave dialectic - and its Zeno’s paradox - the critical doctors *need* the critically ill, ‘they need to reproduce the disabilities that they heal’ (ES, 48).

Practically speaking, Rancière simply inserts a big ‘what if’ into Eagleton’s critical commonplace, his framing metaphor. In a word, ‘what if’ the sick were not sick, the rowers were not ‘just slaves’, and what if the incapable (feet) could make their own figures, pictures, and metaphors? That is, ‘what if’ economic position in the social order did not harmonically correspond with intellectual/aesthetic capacity? What if, then, the ‘myth of equality’ was not a myth that veiled the truth of inequality, but was something that could be verified in practice, as performative ‘doing’.

Hardly an affirmative truth claim, these hypothetical ‘what ifs’ do not demand either a double-lack or a form of critical understanding as the necessary precursor for emancipation: there is no need, here, for any further investiture in the master’s oligarchic knowledge - or any commitment to dialectically perfecting the other. On the contrary, what the ‘what if’ asks for is a performance (of equality). If emancipation is always a proof given to oneself (SP), then *what if* it were assumed that the rowers could look up and, instead of just seeing oars or the back of the head of the person rowing in front of you, ‘they could withdraw the power of a look from the task of the hands’ and, by doing so, ‘restage the scene, building a polemical commonsense in which [workers and/or learners] can do what they “cannot” do’, thus ‘remapping’ a different ‘landscape of the possible’ (JR, 117)?

To escape the seductive circles of entrapment – and to break from a *compound* distribution of the sensible that compounds material lack with aesthetic lack - Rancière suggests unlinking the emancipatory logic of capacity from the critical logic of collective ‘inveiglement’ (ES, 48). This presupposes from the outset, then, ‘that there is no hidden *secret* of the machine that keeps [people] trapped in their place’ (ES, 48).

This hypothetical ‘what if’ is tied to an aesthetic argument that is articulated not by the ‘outside’ of social science, but by a montage of worker voices that Rancière encountered in his archival research. This montage of acts makes intelligible the fact of people exercising creative capacities (in ways that Bourdieu’s sociology had, with all the subtlety of Newtonian mechanics, hammered a foreclosure notice upon). As Rancière describes the worker journals, narratives, and artworks in *The Nights*, they were ‘much more than descriptions of everyday experience. They reinvented the everyday...a

reframing of one's individual experience' (HPA, 274) through these very performances of artistic-intellectual 'part taking'. This implied that workers could do, and were doing, more than their 'one thing' (work), and that the 'gratuitous' of creative play was not a property, as it were, of the fortunate classes. Rancière sees these unexpected acts of equality as interventions that subverted a given distribution of the sensible, and therefore redefined what was in fact possible for anyone. These acts thus 'disorder' any proper relation or correspondence between 'what is done by one's arms, what is looked at by one's eyes, what is felt as a sensory pleasure, and what is thought of as an intellectual concern' (HPA, 277). In short, these different ways of working, thinking, creating, or experiencing are not harmonized to one another, which means that there is no special place or disposition for the creative capacities of anyone.

The point to emphasize is that the 'reinventing' or 'reframing of individual experience' of which Rancière speaks is performed by ordinary 'anonyms' (anyones) - and from the inside out, which is to say, enacted without dependence upon the thought from outside: that is, the thought of the liberator who, as such, represents, explains, or maps the people, and so authorizes himself to hold the skeptron and speak for others.

The experiences, movements, and actions of the workers (in *The Nights*) or the learners (in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*) bear witness to an equal community of capacity that does not fit into any spatial-sociological architecture, or any representational or anatomical ac/count of the social body. Rather, these ways of doing demonstrate a spontaneous (unprogrammed) 'type of experience which neutralizes the circular relationship between knowledge as know-how and knowledge as the distribution of roles. Aesthetic experience eludes the sensible distribution of roles and competences which

structures the hierarchal order' (AK, 4). Whereas Eagleton (1991) argues that what the slave says and sees is always 'about what he does; and what he does is the reason for what he says' (p. 208), 'egalitarian logic' suspends this closed-circuit: it interrupts 'the rapport between what the arms know how to do and what they eyes are capable of seeing' (AK, 4).

The apparent necessity of situations could, by virtue of the power of a 'lifted gaze', be critically divided from the *inside out* by ordinary actors who saw that they could make their own metaphors, images, and descriptions (of states of affairs, and of distant vistas, and of the relation between a distant vista and one's own lived world). The point of Gauney's own aesthetic experience is that there was in fact no logical correspondence between a rower and a lifted gaze, no synchronicity between being a worker and *not* being a gratuitous thinker, writer, dreamer, painter. By the same token, a profligate learner could multiply positions/talents, experience the sensible of beautiful vistas - or do artistic things - *as if* he were the master of the palace where he was laying the floors. The circuit-breaker could be anyone.

### **Epistemophilia & Suspicion: Who Gets to Play?**

If we can agree with Eagleton - I'll agree with him - that oppression is about the kneecapping of creative capacities, we don't have to go far in schools to see some of that going on. And one doesn't need slave-ship metaphors to encounter parallel 'distributions of the sensible': the 'sensory fabric' of schooling that maps out the 'who's who' of aptitudes, readiness, or lack. For one recent example in art-education discourse, Garoian & Gaudelius (2004) take as their point of departure, in 'The Spectacle of Visual Culture', a



seductive, if not pretty commonplace, critical distinction that ‘there are those of us who consume visual culture to be entertained *and* there are those who seek it out to learn something’ (p. 299). This easy distinction - this ‘*and*’ - indicates a fold in a pedagogical map, a distribution (*partage*) of the sensible that’s akin to the distinction between ideology and science. Informed in part by Marcuse’s notion of a ‘one-dimensional’ subjectivity, this fold in the map sets up a *relational* opposition between a capable, more critically-detached ‘those of us’ and a vapid, vulnerable, or entertained ‘them’.

It’s not my privilege to denounce these authors, because I can’t count the times I’ve drawn - and continuously, mechanically redraw - similar lines and distinctions. That said, by generating a (relational) *fold* between two parts of a learning community, this partition already parses out ‘different’ sensory equipments, and better and worse dispositions, in relation to the haptic-visual-sonorous field, and thus different abilities to speak, to make (critical-linguistic) sense about what’s perceptible. At the same time, this distributive fold defines and authorizes who acts upon whom, as well as what is hearable (admissible) as sensible ‘speech’ and what’s heard as inaudible ‘noise’ - or as utterances symptomatic of ill-health or uncritically-embraced pleasures. As for visual pleasure, from the standpoint of screen theory, such pleasures are usually ‘treated with suspicion [as] a particularly insidious form of ideological manipulation’ (Joyrich, 1995, p. 55).

While nobody wants to be on ‘idiot’ side of that fold, I have never yet met anyone who has consumed visual culture and *not* been entertained. Yet that (counter)fact does not change the point of departure: there is a tacit dividing line that separates those who are ready to ‘learn’ from those who just ‘consume’ entertainments or, like pliant wax, just passively receive the libidinal imprints and the subject-defining ‘calls’ of the spectacle.

Whether this division in dispositions/capacities is real or not is not the real point. The point is that, just like any other inegalitarian metaphor, it constructs a drama of known deficits, with points to traverse and cognitive/ethical ‘arrivals’ to achieve (i.e. ‘collective inveiglements’). As for the progress of the filmstrip, a leading theorist in the visual culture field compounds one distribution of the sensible with another by citing studies showing that ‘students do not view images critically’ unless ‘expressly shown how to do so’ (Freedman, 2003, p. 101). Studies indicate, then, that students are unable to take one form of ‘know-how’ - (i.e., critically interpreting ‘textual’ artefacts) - and generalize that linguistic-discursive capacity to the register of imagery, spectacle, visual culture. As a doubled-distance, learners need to acquire certain discursive capacities (or valid ‘speech genres’) before they can ‘make sense’ of the visual-haptic-sonorous field.

Arguably, explication’s art of distance is an art of confabulating ‘obstacles’ for others. Do these obstacles mean that students do not know and also do not know how to know? Or does it mean that *certain* acts or statements are inadmissible, do not fit into the critical episteme that appraises good sense and separates it from its noisy other?

Whatever the case, what’s interesting to me is how effortlessly the world (of learning) can be sliced, diced, partitioned and obstacle-ized, and then how ‘naturally’ forms of ‘pedagogization’ come to the rescue in remediating these sliced up gaps/distances, be it the distance between two talents, between the image and ‘viewing’ the image critically, or between a careless mode of entertainment and its analytically ‘detached’ other.

On one hand, it could be argued - at least, I’ll say it about myself - that this so-called ‘detachment’ is another way of saying *my* entertainment, my play: that is to say, the teacher’s critical game, the pleasures of the text, the satisfaction of hermeneutical

interpretation, the thrill of decoding the symptom or opaque hieroglyph so as to unveil that which lies behind. And this kind of interpretative ‘play’ perhaps informs that unique critico-literary passion that underpins the fabricating of dystopic cages that people are trapped within (and then require extraction from). In the case of Bourdieu, the mode of literary play resolves into a story of systematic illusionism that is so total, so perfectly seamless, that it in fact becomes possible to bid adieu to emancipation itself. One might add, however, that any ‘theorist of entrapment’ worthy of the name has to explicate the conspiracy in such a fashion that every wayward *exception* to the science - every sign or appearance of freedom or resistance - is doubled (haunted) by its ‘paranoid’ other. And this means that every conceivable ‘way out’ of the trap - every performance that refutes domination or entrapment - is *also* a portal opening back into the heart of the labyrinth.<sup>26</sup> For example, the ‘exception’ to the rule of cultural reproduction is turned, by Bourdieu, into ‘a parvenu’ who, by stepping out of place, in turn better veils the workings of the inequality machine (Chapter 2). In this familiar critical (co-optation) logic, every story, image, utterance, or appearance of things that challenges the trap’s perfect system can be re-explained as an ‘effect’ of the system, or is simply implicated as an element of misrecognition that perpetuates the conspiracy. For Pynchon, the writer who turned paranoia into a verb, *this* way of reading things - the art of paranoia - begins by assuring us that the ‘the hieroglyphic streets’ are ‘haunted’ by ‘another mode of meaning behind

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<sup>26</sup> In Bourdieu’s ‘orbiting ecstasy of paranoia’, every surface appearance, sign or symbolic act is ‘doubled’ and, as it were, co-opted by a market co-efficient, that is, doubled (and made *explicable*) by an ‘economic-symbolic logic’ that explains an ‘obvious’ surface appearance/event in terms of a ‘hidden’ logic of symbolic exchange. For example, an artist who makes an artwork that won’t ‘sell’ in the cash market is in turn ‘paid’ with forms of ‘capital’ within the market of symbolic ‘transactions’. As Rancière gets at the zero-sum game more generally, the logic that ‘invites you to see the signs of Capital behind everyday objects and behaviors kills the strangeness of an appearance of resistance that bears witness to the non-necessary or intolerable character of a world’ (PTA, 83).

the obvious' (Pynchon, 1966, p. 181). And it is the latent and/or hidden dimension of (*another*) meaning that the theorist commands (and reduces) for those trapped, at street level, within the conspiracy.

As Kristen Ross (1991) gets at the problem, Bourdieu's social science offers 'for the enlightened reader' the 'endlessly renewable *pleasure* of lucidity, the *frisson* of demystification ... usually reserved for the interpretation of fiction' (p. xii). What's more, the enlightened reader, unlike the social agent who can never be in a position to read the Author (or even 'teach themselves'), this enlightened reader - (the reader *pre-disposed* to reading Bourdieu) - gets to share the same transcendent vantage point of the code-breaking scientist/author. All together, those of the science detachedly observe - with bird's eye view and its spiraling updraft of hermeneutical adrenaline - all those other social 'objects' down below who, as such, are ensnared within 'the hieroglyphic streets' and sentenced to *expressing* not speech, but only 'symptoms' of the conspiracy itself.

In this light, the 'passions of psychoanalysis', as well as interpretive 'frisson' of critical science, can also be seen as an incandescent game that is, in critical discourses, consecrated as *the* method of 'science', even if the game is enjoyed as 'play' only by the competent (skeptronic) few: the literate educator-scientists who, in the name emancipatory science, and with the stakes defined quite seriously as 'liberation' itself, forgets that they alone are having some variety of fun.

This means, I think, that the dispassionate gaze of the critical scientist is, after all, a pretty entertaining one, a kind of 'glass-bead game' for those (ludic masters) with a particular 'feel' for that game. As suggested in Chapter One, this is exactly one of the

lessons the students in Poland tried, I think, to teach me: that my play - my exploding theoretical inevitable - was not their play, and that my game - and more specifically, the roles it elaborated for them - was not the one they were going to play (even if I was entirely serious about it, serious about the stakes).

On the other hand, in these ‘distributions’ and ‘detachments’ cited above, there seems to lurk a kind of symbolic-discursive allergy to vital/visual pleasure itself, an orientation that would detach the critico-discursive eye and, holding it aloft, opposes *its* way of seeing to the pleasures of images or any (*other*) kind of ludic and/or haptic engagement that might challenge ‘the discourse’. As Shaviro (1993) suggests in his book about movies, this kind of criticalizing posture first tends to ‘equate passion, fascination, and enjoyment with mystification; and it opposes to these a knowledge that is disengaged from affect, and irreducible to images. Beneath its claim to methodological rigor and political correctness, [this orientation] manifests a barely contained panic at the prospect of being affected and moved by visual forms’ (p. 14).



Figure 21. Highball Coaster from *In the Faculty Room*

*Panic* is an interesting choice of words, here, particularly in relation to a variety of knowledge that is 'disengaged', that is set apart from felt visual/haptic energies or the image's opposition to finished meanings. As I read Shaviro, this 'barely contained panic' is another way of saying loss of epistemological mastery, a loss of dramaturgical and oratorical control over the learning-knowing workshop, over what might be *said* about what is sensationally apprehended (and thus loss of control over the terms of engagement, over the pedagogical link between *sense* and *sense*).

As for the terms of engagement, here, De Castell & Jenson (2007) state that the privileging of textual-linguistic codifications in schools (and the attendant 'propositional' construction of knowledge) implies a very reductive conception of learning itself - of what 'knowledge' is, and of what educational 'success' means - rendering all other non-propositional forms of learning or creative doing 'unrecognizable' (p. 127). As the prevailing 'distribution of the sensible' defining 'what counts' in schools (what can be heard, repeated, predicted, tested, and evaluated) *other* modes of learning evocative of passion, fascination, and involvement are part of a 'very different epistemology from that defining curricular knowledge' (p. 129).

In *The Cinematic Body* (1993), Shaviro evokes, I think, this 'different' or 'non-curricular' epistemology by, for one, refusing to take the sensation, appearance, or (moving) image as the 'index of something that is missing....as a symptom of lack' (p. 14) that need be re-mastered by the propositional/disciplinary code. In the lack-based view evoked in Ellsworth's discussion, the theorist of image, film, or spectacle comes to the rescue to explain - or to voice-over - what's 'absent' in the image by disclosing the 'hidden but intelligible structure' of meaning that supposedly stands behind the

perceptible image (p. 14). As Shaviro argues, dominant models of cinema-spectacle critique are based on a 'reflex movement of suspicion' - on a 'fear of images' - which in turn requires/demands theoretical 'damage-control' (p. 10), that is, 'textualization and linguistic articulation' (p. 25) or, as it were, the discursive perfection of an imperfect or lacking mode of felt experience. In turn, the *phobic* orientation to visual experiences and images demands not only detachment - an 'aesthetic of distance' - but also the 'theorist's need for control', for various 'distanciation techniques' and 'recuperative' (interpretative-textual) strategies (pp.10-12).

Here, the link between *distanciation* and *recuperation* enacts a distance to reduce, an absence to recuperate, and thus an explanation to mete out to the (ignorant) viewer. Whether in the form of 'psychoanalysis', 'the hermeneutics of suspicion', or 'ideology critique', Shaviro (1993) argues that these disciplines (re)assert the mastery of the 'Symbolic order' as the antidote to the 'ontological instability' of images, to the scintillating or unregulated fascinations that images convey (p. 14). To what is felt - the 'materiality of sensation and affect' - these recuperative disciplines oppose the 'order of significations', 'deep structures', 'conceptual orders', and meta-languages (unavailable to the common spectator). As a means of managing the link between sense and sense, or between the image and its effect/affect, 'percept and affect must be subordinated to textuality and the Law of the signifier' (p. 15). Thus, as Ellsworth (1989) remarked in her own discussion of education(al media), one expert way of 'knowing' and 'explaining' things supplants other ways of knowing, experiencing, doing or feeling.

By presupposing the hidden behind what's observable, and by understanding the 'causal' reality behind the street-level sensation, these disciplines continue the 'Platonist



project of attacking the illusionism' by, namely, appealing to the explanatory power of the linguistic-discursive order, and to a mode of 'scientific rationality' that Shaviro (1993) links to a brand of 'epistemophilia'<sup>27</sup> (p. 10). Here, the symptom, the false image, or the hidden reality keeps the skeptron-wielding scientists/experts in charge, and though Shaviro is not explicitly addressing Bourdieu, he could be when he writes that 'the falsity of the image is the necessary consequence of the truth of the discourse' (p. 15).<sup>28</sup>

Again, *who* gets to play the game of epistemophilia, and who gets to be the object of the game (the person caught in the illusionism, or the person whose every act, choice, or meaning-making gesture can be re/explained at a meta-level by a 'discourse' that's not available to them)? And who, then, is certified to 'legislate the "truth" of sensation', to 'subordinate experience to, and contextualize it within, an order of references and significations' (Shaviro, 1993, p. 26)? And then who in turn *get's* the legislation (or in Ellsworth's sense) the 'juridical-discursive' *voice-overs*.

Shaviro's book about movies can, in one respect, be read as an unrepentant defense of the spectator, of the spectator's capacity to *sense* and (pleasurably) *make sense* of what they feel, and without having what they see/feel/hear explained to them by an epistemoholic who assumes that every visual pleasure conceals the insidiously disguised codes of hegemonic domination. What's 'on screen' for Shaviro - or what happens when

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<sup>27</sup> For Shaviro, reflecting on Metz's work, 'epistemophilia' is 'fascination turned against itself', a form of theoretical 'damage control' *vis* the image, as it (the discourse) endeavors to 'limit and neutralize the "imaginary" distortions' (p. 10).

<sup>28</sup> As Blumenberg (1983) suggests, 'the hermeneutic function remains legitimate only so long as it lays open to self-consciousness what is hidden from it, convicts it of having been subject to the illusion of autonomous presence, and thus binds it to the newly disclosed dimension [of the 'hidden' behind 'what is given' or presently encountered]' (p. 18). Reflecting on modern social and historical sciences, Rancière writes, 'there is no science, we have learned, but the science of the hidden. And the production of *this hidden* is a poetic operation essential to the constitution of knowledge in historical study' (NL, 52).

Jacotot stages the book - rather than being the index of what's missing (and thus the starting point for the explication) - is instead viewed as an medium of engagement, an affordance for 'intensive', 'excessive', and 'passionate' experiences that resist the 'closure of definition...without regulation or control' (p. 16). For Shaviro, the screen - the cinematic thing-in-common, as it were - is no longer denounced as a bombarding system of 'mystifications' (p. 13), a 'device of ideological reproduction' (p. 30), or the symptom of an absence that needs to be rectified (p. 24). One of the things that links Shaviro's cinema-story to Rancière's logic of capacity - and no less to Ellsworth's analysis of critical pedagogies - is the view that theorizing entrapment/emancipation based on 'what's missing' is less than liberatory. Though it's my own gloss, Shaviro's affirmation of cinematic pleasure (indirectly) validates an aesthetic equa-distance - a polyphonic theater - that begins by *trusting* the viewer's self-sufficient capacity to be 'left alone' with their 'will to learn' (IS, 9). And though it's still my gloss, Shaviro's rejection of the suspicious cinema theorist can be generalized to those critical educational studies which conclude that student 'do not view images critically' unless they are 'expressly shown how to do so' - that is, not *until* they've mastered the textual-discursive order *first*. Shaviro contends that it's 'high time we rid ourselves of the notion that we can somehow free ourselves from illusion (or from ideology) by recognizing and theorizing our own entrapment within it' (p. 10). And this notion, as Rancière variously shows, usually implies not theorizing 'our own entrapment', but rather *other* people's entrapment.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire does not, at least initially, identify absences or distances in order to recuperate or reduce them. Literacy-learning does not begin with obstacles between sense and sense-making, nor with rudiments or stage-specific needs.

Freire *starts* by assuming the facility of the ‘illiterate’ to speak about images, to name or talk about what they see or feel. Freire thus begins by assuming that anyone, even those who cannot read or write, can translate pictures *as if* they exhibited the artistic-literary power to engage a ‘forest of signs and symbols’. Engaged in this way, one learns to read *by* reading - as a competent reader within ‘a circle of power’. For Jacotot, this means in turn that the person who *is* reading will ‘take a route that is unknown to the ignorant master’ (IS, 23): they won’t share the same ‘monological plane’ as the author or curriculum designer. Emancipation’s ‘method is identical to its morals...In universal teaching we believe that any man [*sic*] feels pleasure and pain, and that it is only up to him to know when, how, and by what set of circumstances he felt this pleasure or pain’ (IS, 67). In Freire’s course of events, he begins by verifying those extant capacities, but *then* the ‘morals’ and the ‘methods’ diverge. Instead of unforeseen clearings, Freire secures the aesthetic route forward, motoring up the classical-realist ‘engine’, coordinating the scenes and sequences of the in/admissible, the visible, and the sayable. As for the filmic ‘engine’, Freire’s descriptions of his own mediational procedures start to sound, at times, a bit like the kinds of quasi-psychoanalytic ‘technologies’ found in scientological therapies aimed at guiding ‘damaged souls’ toward the soteriological state of ‘clear’.

## Rethinking Aesthetics: From *The Nights of Labor* to K.O.S.

*Equality is a presupposition, an initial axiom – or it is nothing.*

While it's a distant jump from rural Brazil to urban Seattle (or the South Bronx), Freire's starting point in capacity brings me to a recent (2010) art exhibition of multi-modal artworks by *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.* at the Frye Museum in Seattle, WA.<sup>29</sup> What's remarkable about this travelling art show, according to *Art Forum*, is not the fact that these artworks were included in the Whitney Biennial of 1985 or the Venice Biennale of 1988, but that those who did the art were 'at-risk' high school students from the South Bronx, students 'written off by the school system' who rose 'to the highest echelons of the artworld' (Amor, 2009).

Echelons and artworld success aside, I'd like to look at how Tim Rollins & the K.O.S. group (*Kids of Survival*) enact a 'redistribution' of the sensible, and how this redistribution of capacities can (as Buck-Morss might put it) be related to a past 'constellation' of scenes and voices from *The Nights of Labor* and *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

First, since this chapter began with the question of 'ideology', it's interesting to note that Tim Rollins, as the K.O.S. teacher-collaborator, has been charged for framing his practices on ideologically-suspect footing. As for what that might mean, Rollins first introduced 'minority kids' from the South Bronx into the 'dominant' museum world of traditional painting, minimalist sculpture, and heady conceptual art. In Bourdieu's logic, this might amount to sending a formal cultural code to a receiver who can't get it.

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<sup>29</sup> *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: A History* (<http://fryemuseum.org/exhibition/3315>)

Moreover, Rollins bases his *Art and Knowledge* activities on what might be called the great classical-canonical works of Western Literature - the art of the dead, the (mostly) white, and the (mostly) male. As Steinhauer (2008) describes the mode of production, K.O.S. fabricates multimodal artworks by ‘past[ing] pages from a classic work of literature, or sheet music from a classical composition, onto a canvas [while discussing the work being read/listened to] and then paints over [the pages or score] with images that represent themes in the work as well as how those themes relate to members’ backgrounds and lives’.

Rollins’ practices have thus triggered warning-bells from the standpoint of critical (art) theory (Graves, 2010, Goldfine, 1996). And what’s perhaps suspect, then, is the idea of introducing ‘black and Latino students’ into the dominant cultural representations and institutional fields of so-called ‘high art’. Such practices, as Tavin (2003) argues in a more general context, risk ‘inculcating students to existing cultural hierarchies’ while disregarding the fact that dominant canons always ‘presuppose particular ways of life’ (p. 197). At the same time, such ‘elitist’ practices may alienate them, students, from their own local cultural capital, from forms of self-understanding, struggle, and empowerment. While not to be simply dismissed, this argument assumes a clear cause-effect relationship between the ‘content’ of a canonical-classical work and the cultural normativity - or the ‘symbolic violence’ - such works might enact upon (minority) others. Here, ‘fine art canons’ not only presuppose dominant ‘universals’, but also uncritically ignore ‘children and youth’ in their sociocultural places - their sites of everyday struggle for meaning and identity. Such ‘fine art’ practices thus ‘ignore the way that children and youth frequently construct their every-changing identities through popular culture...By erasing the politics

of “culture”, educators reify insider practices and privileged myths and codes of classification that, at best, reify the status quo’ (Tavin, 2003, p. 198). As in the work of Lawrence Grossberg, the key signifiers - ‘youth’, ‘struggle’, ‘politics of culture’ - serve as the ‘popular’ starting point for ‘interventions’, or as Grossberg (1989) remarks: ‘First we must allow ourselves to be educated by those we are attempting to understand, by the cultural forms they enjoy, and by the practices they engage. We must learn to listen to them if we expect them to listen to us’ (p. 114).

Along the lines of this (art)education commonplace, Rollins has been criticized by those ‘uncomfortable with the specter of a white overseer of black and Latino students administering works of the Western canon’, and using the classical texts and the fine-arts media of a dominant culture that is not theirs (Graves, 2006). Rollins deploys what Bourdieu calls, in *Reproduction*, the ‘dominant cultural arbitrary’ - the normative codes, aesthetic forms, and symbolic capital of the privileged classes. Now, I’m going to try to trouble these critical arguments in a way that does not, I hope, end up with me receiving floral bouquets from Lynne Cheney or E.D. Hirsch.

First, what Grossberg/Tavin insist should *not be ignored* by educators is, in large part, what Jacotot says an ignorant schoolmaster has to be - or, in my own case, *really is* - ‘ignorant about’: the critical condition of so-called ‘children and youth’ in their ‘given’ cultural ethos, their so-called struggle for ‘identity’ in the everyday of popular (media) culture. Here, Grossberg’s recommendation that critical educators become ‘a part of the masses again’ (p. 114) not only asserts a gap or primary difference from others (i.e., ‘youth’, ‘youth culture’, ‘masses’), but also stresses the ethical imperative of traveling to

them, and to invert 'elitist' hierarchies in the service of co-exploring 'their' local forms of cultural experience/investment.

This stooping logic, as such, was precisely what was such emancipatory 'turn off' for the emancipated worker-artists and plebian-philosophers who populate (and to large extent represent themselves within) the pages of *The Nights of Labor*. As Rancière reflects on his research, 'these workers, who should have supplied me with information on working conditions and forms of class consciousness, provided me with something altogether different: a sense of similarity, a demonstration of equality' (ES, 19).

Now, with regard to the 'politics of culture' and intellectual emancipation, Jacotot goes against the logical grain (of *then* and *now*) by suggesting that what was 'in the book' - from the standpoint of message or content - was not as significant as the *formal* terms of engagement with the book. For Jacotot, what mattered was the aesthetic aspect of how the book was 'staged' in common, in 'apartness' (equidistance), and how this 'intermediating' formality set into play not the sequencing of an 'inveiglement', but instead a 'logic of capacity'. Regardless of content (or whatever moral-political lessons championed by the *Telemaque*'s author), the book was engaged as an equally-shared interface. As such, it became the chance occasion for Jacotot's students' own 'setting up' or 'setting out' - a means of moving forward where persons 'learned something and related it to all the rest'. The ignorant schoolmaster had to, as it were, play without security (even though the teacher could, in this role, insist upon 'attention').

As Jacotot describes the accident of intellectual emancipation, it could have been the *Telemaque* or any other book. Though Rollins may not be an ignorant master, he acts

the part, at least, by refusing to meet students in their presumed condition (of lack) - be it the South Bronx, the rower's galley, or whatever scholastic hierarchy of representation that would 'know' them. Nor did he try to locate them within some 'complex terrain of struggle and resistance' specific to the critique of 'popular' representation (Tavin, 2003, p. 199). Now, my argument is not that Rollins' 'catalysts' as he calls them - be it Kafka or Flaubert, Ellison or Shelley - are the best or the worst ones, or that they can't be challenged on grounds of 'cultural normativity'. I'm only pointing to the fact that these texts were not adapted to supposed socio-cultural situations, to diagnosable reading levels, nor made to conform to or redress the 'needs' of learners in order elicit certain types of (critical) understanding or agency effects. Unlike phobic discourses that focus on the critique of media culture and its 'perverse' effects on 'youth', the *K.O.S.* method did not address the immediate, close-to-home 'realities' of the students (that is, as oppressed subjects, as remedial readers, or as scholastically-expelled bodies). At the same time, *K.O.S.* works-actions doggedly refused to *invert* hierarchies (of art/culture) by saying that there are certain bodies in certain locations appropriate to certain means of (creative) doing, to certain types of (better or worse) media, or to certain sensible materials. The *K.O.S.* method does not seek to reproduce the hallowed thematics of the 'great works', or obtain 'the' lesson from them. Rather, the artworks color outside of the lines, are radically intermedial, combining blood and broken auto-glass on the same surface as the Text, where 'presences' and 'significations', abstract forms and *arte povera* bricks, unpredictably meet up - and meet up in a (usually) unfinalizable montage that in turn gives spectators their own breathing room as well.



If there is, for Jacotot, no proper ‘place’ for the intelligence of anyone, then surely there can be no proper medium or ‘good form’ of expression for intelligences that are equal. To link this argument to the previous section, K.O.S. practices did not start from the view that there are certain bodies which could ‘not afford the luxury of the symbolic’, or take it for granted that ‘gratuitous play’ was an impossibility for the poor or the ‘at-risk’. If the issue of ‘identity’ fits into Rollins’ *Art and Knowledge Workshops*, then what is at stake are *other* questions, questions ‘about *who* can make art, how art is made, who can learn, and what’s possible’ (Rollins, 1996, cited in Goldfine).

As I translate this, Rollins’ own questions evoke the stakes at the heart of *The Nights of Labor*, precisely where Rancière’s worker-artists did what they ‘could not’ do and, by doing so, overturned correspondence-theories about what certain bodies ‘needed’, where they fit into the order of things, and how they might be identified, mapped, and progressively developed. Not only did they do what they ‘could not’, but in doing so, the worker-artists ignored the patronymic directive that they had to write about what they knew and reflect upon that which was *closest* to them - oppression, popular struggle, worker culture, and so forth. On the other hand, Rancière is clear that the ethical imperative of to go to the cultural place of the ‘other’ in order to understand ‘their’ discourse and communicate with *them* already pre-supposes a distribution of the sensible, enacting from the outset a sense of ‘dissimilarity’ that in turn sets the stage for practices of mutually-assured infantilization.

When it came to the books that Gauney himself recommended to his friends, these were not works ‘engaging with social issues’, but novels about ‘romantic characters’ who, contrary to the problem of the worker, faced a different type of crisis: the symbolic

crisis of not having any legitimate 'place in society' (NL, 34). Such crises - being 'homeless' in the new social order - defined the worker's own dream of being 'occupationally' out of place, of being *more than* the person who does one function, or tied to necessity. Here, Bakhtin (1984) evokes the carnival spirit of a similar brand of 'adventure novel', where the 'circle of connections that [characters] can establish, the circle of events in which they participate, is not predetermined and not limited by their character, nor by any social world in which they might actually have been embodied' (p. 102).

These new types of art - and this new way of identifying art - thus broke up the 'classical-realist' logic of representation, the system for 'the arts' that made certain high or low 'actions' correspond with specific ('better' or 'worse') social classes, and made certain noble or ignoble forms/media of 'expression' correspond with specific social bodies and artistic subject matters.<sup>30</sup> Now, any-body or thing might be the subject of art, experience art, or 'do' art: art conferred (an 'anything goes') visibility on anyone and anything (PA). What Rancière calls the 'politics' of the 'aesthetic regime' is not, then, the politics of artworks or the artist's who make them, but a new 'politicity' of the forms of aesthetic-sensible experience, a redistribution of what and who can be seen or said (in or about art), and of who can make or do (artistically).

As Rancière argues in the *Politics of the Aesthetic*, with the 'aesthetic revolution' the dis-ordering of hierarchal/representational modes (as well as their generic modes of

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<sup>30</sup> As Bakhtin evokes the rules, 'biography, social status and social class are the stable all-determining basis for plot connections; contingency has no place here. The hero is assigned to a plot as someone fully embodied and strictly localized in life, as someone dressed in the concrete and impenetrable garb of his class or social station' (p. 104). As a distribution of the sensible, 'characters are distributed according to plot, and they can interact with one another in a meaningful way only in this well-defined and concrete ground' (p. 104).

social address) in turn implied the ‘triggering [of] new passions [in anyone], which means new forms of balance or imbalance between an occupation and the sensory equipment appropriate to it’ (AS, 73). One could now, as Rancière puts it, become a ‘stranger to oneself’. More practically speaking, there are no longer bodies destined to either ‘the fabrication of clouds’ or ‘the fabrication of locks’: the aesthetic revolution, as a politics of experience, ‘refutes any opposition between the golden race and the iron race, any hierarchy, even an inverted one - between [persons] devoted to manual work and [persons] destined to the exercise of thought’ (IS, 37).

K.O.S. offers an interesting foil by which to explore Rancière’s view of aesthetics. As with K.O.S., what was at stake for the workers in *The Nights* was not, as Rancière suggested, the local ‘struggle’ over the content of representations, but the more primary question of *who* could make images, *who* could do art or ‘aestheticize’ a life, and, by implication, who could intervene within a common sensory field of shareable representations/meanings. Here, Rancière recounts the various experiences of ‘laborers secretly in love with useless things’ (NL, 6) and their ‘dream of moving to the other side of the canvas’ (NL, 5).

To move to the ‘other side of the canvas’ implied, for one, a refusal to be represented by others, including the utopian architects of whatever collective futures. Secondly, this move to the other side of the canvas also implied exchanging roles and capacities with those ‘naturally’ entitled to speak, make gratuitous images, or represent worlds (artistically). Third, it meant that anyone could put their play drive in gear; anyone could say, ‘me, too, I’m a painter’. As Rancière qualifies this ‘other side’ - the *action* taken by the thinker, the poet, or the painter - the dream of the workers was not (as one

might expect) to ‘represent the people’ or the ‘glory’ of worker community, but to reframe one’s own world, the possibilities of one’s own life, to become a ‘stranger to oneself’. Or as Bakhtin (1984) caps this basic move, it means (for me) highlighting the capacity of equal consciousnesses to ‘outgrow, as it were, from within and to render *untrue* any externalizing [names] and finalizing definition[s] of them’ (p. 59).

In *The Nights*, this polemical ‘move to the other side of the canvas’ *first* implied the overturning of the Aristotelian logic of ‘occupations’ that defined the artist as an *occupation*, a fixed role: the occupation of those who ‘make or do’ representations called ‘the arts’. To be on the ‘other side of the canvas’ meant to break with this old sensory fabric, its distribution of fixed roles, and that fabric’s confinement of ‘the arts’ to proper places, objects, and rules of visibility. When the arts as such lose their closed self-definition, the occupation of artist - as the fixed role of the person who makes and does them - is similarly dissolved. The aesthetic regime, in this sense, is characterized less by the ‘non-purposiveness’ of the experience than by the *placelessness* of the activity, and by the blur between art and everyday, theater and world.

Again, the ‘power of the painter’, as Rancière remarks, was less in the content of the representation than in the unexpected power of *doing* the ‘impossible’: the power of anyone to intervene on the sensory canvas of representation, to engage distant perceptible materials, or to theatrically reconstruct ‘the possible’ of identities, territories, and ‘natural’ entitlements to act, speak, or do. Or as Rollins asserts, ‘to dare to make history when you are young, when you are a minority, when you are working, or nonworking class, when you are voiceless in society, takes courage...[By making art] we were making our own history. We weren’t going to accept history as something given to us’

(Rollins, cited in Romaine, 2009, p. 42). Here, for the students, ‘making art became a process of transforming their experiences by revealing their capacity to remake their own destiny’ (Romaine, 2009, p. 42).

If Rollins ignores ‘children and youth’ in their condition, it also might be said that he ignores, to some extent, the fact that his students are ‘children’ or ‘youth’ altogether. In the classical doctrines of emancipation, these terms are part of an ensemble of homogenizing (pedagogicizing) categories which usually show up at the right moment to become the conceptual vehicles - or the framing metaphors - for assigning lack, for siting immaturity-and-voicelessness as the ‘not yet’ starting point for some dialectic of enlightenment.

To break with generic notions of ‘youth’, or ‘at risk’ youth, it’s not really that surprisingly that Rollins and K.O.S. became frustrated by the ‘strictures of the public school system’. And this meant breaking from the sequential logic of competence before performance (the strictures of explication). As Rollins puts it, ‘a big problem with the traditional school is that it places the student in a constant state of preparation...I begin with a different premise. Instead of constantly training kids to “become” artists, why not take on the job of encouraging them to be artists now?’ (cited in Berry, 2009, p. 12). Above all, Rollins refuses to understand persons as seamlessly-determined products of social reality or conditioning environments (Romaine, 2009, p.42). Here, ‘rejecting determinist methods of both political action and teaching, which force experiences to conform to abstractions’, for Rollins the point was to ‘create situations’ - ‘educating by art making’ - where persons became aware of their own energies (just as Rollins had when he became ‘conscious of himself as an artist’) (Romaine, 2009, pp. 41-43).

On the other hand, K.O.S.'s commercial/critical success could also be seen to wind back to trouble my argument, making Rollins into a special 'magician' while branding K.O.S. works with the distinctive aura of 'the exception'. But as Jacotot argues, the point is not 'about making great painters; it's a matter of making the emancipated: people capable of saying, *me too, I'm a painter*, a statement that contains nothing in the way of pride, only the reasonable feeling of power that belongs to any reasonable being... We can thus dream of a society of the emancipated that would be a society of artists. Such a society would repudiate the division between those who know and those who don't, between those who possess or don't possess the property of intelligence' (IS, 71). The dream of a society of artists would presuppose, then, that anyone can take, use (or happily misuse) a mediating affordance of equality - or some generously enchanted toy - and that any learner is always already qualified to play, is already ready to be, not a 'substance', but 'a pure function of adventure' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 102).

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