Rethinking critical theory between Rancière and the Frankfurt School

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

List of Abbreviations

Rancière, Jacques

AL   *Althusser's Lesson*

D   *Disagreement*

DIS   *Dissensus*

ES   *The Emancipated Spectator*

FRM   'A few remarks on the method of Jacques Rancière'

IS   *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*

ME   *The Method of Equality*

MS   *Mute Speech*

NH   *The Names of History*

OIS   'On Ignorant Schoolmasters'

OSP   *On the Shores of Politics*

OTI   'On the Theory of Ideology – Althusser's Politics'

PA   *The Politics of Aesthetics*

PN   *Proletarian Nights*

PP   *The Philosopher and His Poor*

TD   'The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics'

WIS   'Work, Identity, Subject'

Rancière, Jacques and Honneth, Axel

RoD   *Recognition or Disagreement*

Rancière, Jacques and Panagia, Davide

DW   'Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière'

Abstract

This thesis argues that Rancière's conception of 'aesthetic emancipation' is a productive and neglected way of thinking about three political practices: a politics of memory, struggles for recognition and emancipatory education. I argue it can offer either a supplement or an alternative to recent Frankfurt School theorisations of these practices, particularly in relation to struggles concerned broadly with decolonisation.

Specifically, in the first chapter, I argue that deliberative theorists miss an important form of political discourse, namely the speech of what Rancière calls the 'part without a part.' I examine the implications of this omission for a politics of memory and suggest that drawing attention to these marginalised, disruptive acts can have implications both for witnessing and taking up aesthetic acts of politics in the present. In the second chapter, I argue that Rancière's concept of disagreement allows us to theorise struggles for 'recognition' in a way which avoids the problematic reconciliatory tendencies which haunt the work of Axel Honneth. However, in order to capture the struggle of an indigenous 'politics of refusal,' I argue against the claim that political subjects act in the 'name of anyone'. In the third chapter, I give a partial defence of Rancière's critique of stultification in relation to emancipatory educational practices and, by developing a more nuanced account of explanation, show how *certain* explanations might inhibit the will of political actors to act upon their equality. In all three cases, then, I suggest Rancière could add to our understanding of these practices but only by making modifications to his account, specifically to the concepts of dis-identification and explanation.

Ultimately, by thinking between Rancière and the Frankfurt School, I argue we can think both affirmative, disruptive critical theory as well as a modest 'negative' critical theory of unequal social structures.

Introduction

Struggles of the Age

Nancy Fraser argues that the best definition of critical theory is still the one offered by Marx in 1843: 'the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age' (Fraser, 1985: 97). A critical social theory, she suggests, is informed by a 'partisan though not uncritical identification' with certain oppositional social movements and this identification informs the questions that the theorist asks and the models she develops.[1] Indeed, the extent to which critical theory contributes to the 'self-clarification' of these movements is the yardstick by which its success can be measured. In that article, Fraser assesses the success of Habermas' theory of communicative action according to its effectiveness in theorising the situation and prospects of one of the key social movements of the age: the feminist movement.[2] In a similar move, I will consider another very loosely defined 'movement' – or perhaps put better, a large number of separate but related struggles – which are all broadly concerned with decolonisation. Whilst decolonisation is often associated with the 1950s and 1960s, during the era of independence struggles, I suggest that anti-colonial

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[1] This is not an uncontroversial claim. Honneth argues that the 'dubious premise that a critical social theory should be normatively oriented towards social movements' is misguided since it reduces 'the whole spectrum of social discontent and suffering … to that small part of it that wins official recognition in the political public sphere' (Honneth in Honneth and Fraser, 2003: 124). Fraser responds that her solution is preferable to Honneth's alternative focus on prepolitical experience and inarticulate suffering since it has 'the advantage of being subject to critical scrutiny in open debate' (Fraser in ibid., 205). For Rancière, Fraser's solution would be preferable to Honneth's because it moves us further away from a hermeneutics of suspicion: interpreting what those suffering are unable to articulate for themselves. See more on the hermeneutics of suspicion in chapter three, part four. Rancière may also be able to help Fraser respond to Honneth here, since his struggles are precisely those which seek to disrupt official political discourses through the appearance of a political subject.

[2] This presumes that we can talk about 'the' feminist 'movement' at all. Perhaps a better description is the one used by bell hooks, 'feminist movement' without the article (hooks, 1994: 111).

and anti-imperial resistance is still a pressing concern across the world today. We can see this by examining just two examples from very different contexts, which I explore in greater detail in later chapters.

Firstly, there are a number of decolonising initiatives revolving around education which have emerged in recent years, both in the former metropole and in the peripheries. Perhaps best known is the 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement, which started in South Africa and was taken up by students at the University of Oxford, demanding the statue of Cecil Rhodes be removed from Oriel College. Beyond this symbolic removal, the movement also demanded, far more broadly, the recognition and contestation of the colonial underpinnings of knowledge production, pedagogical practice, the constitution of the curriculum and the canon, the framing and funding of research programmes and so on. According to Gebrial:

> The argument always was that European colonialism was and continues to be a shaping force of modern history and pedagogy, and that this is overlooked – particularly in Britain – in our education system out of discomfort with the truth that it harbours and the reality it reveals… (Gebrial, 2018: 23)

The failure of the movement so far to achieve the removal of the statue, as well as resistance to similar campaigns such as *Why is My Curriculum White*,[3] testify to the power of the forces against which such movements struggle. Not least of these was the financial threat to the college made by wealthy donors who threatened to withdraw funding.

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[3] See, for instance, Peters, 2015 on the campaign 'Why is my curriculum white?' For a (relatively balanced) journalistic discussion of the reaction to the student demand to 'decolonise' the philosophy curriculum at SOAS, see https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/feb/19/soas-philosopy-decolonise-our-minds-enlightenment-white-european-kenan-malik. Accessed 14 December 2018.

Mainstream media narratives have also obscured the actual demands and concerns raised by the movement, by framing it as the actions of mollycoddled 'snowflake' millennials, whose sensitivity threatens free speech, academic rigour and the 'accurate' portrayal of history.

Secondly, in a very different context, a large number of indigenous struggles continue to take place in settler states, particularly against past and present expropriation of land. Some of these, such as the so-called 'crisis of Oka' in 1990, can be considered properly 'spectacular.' When Mohawk land was to be seized to extend a golf course, the people responded with a seventy-eight day armed resistance in defence of their lands, resulting in two fatalities. This was the first well-publicised violent conflict between indigenous peoples and the Canadian state. Since then, large-scale protests, such as the Idle No More movement of 2012/2013, have continued to resist further threats to indigenous land and treaty rights (Coulthard, 2014: 160-165). But many other indigenous 'refusals'[4] are much more mundane, every day acts of struggle and resistance. The anthropologist Audra Simpson, whose work I consider in more detail in chapter two, tells the story of her own encounter with a US border guard who questioned the use of her status card to cross the US-Canadian border (Simpson, 2014: 119). The guard's suspicious tone changed abruptly upon discovering Simpson was born in Brooklyn, at which point she asserted 'You are an American.' I suggest that Simpson's defiant and furious response, 'I am a Mohawk' fundamentally challenges American and Canadian claims to sovereignty and is an 'identity claim' I discuss further in chapter two.

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[4] For more on Audra Simpson's politics of refusal, see chapter two, parts two and four. See also Simpson, 2014.

These are just two examples of a large number of struggles, occurring across the world, which are broadly concerned with decolonising our pedagogies, politics and practices.[5] If Critical Theory is indeed oriented by the struggles of the age, then it seems relatively uncontroversial that these struggles should constitute one of its concerns. So it is odd that one of the most important schools of critical theory, the Frankfurt School – which is also the school that Fraser is associated with – is largely silent on questions of empire and race, at least in the work carried out by its most famous recent representatives.[6] Critics outside of the tradition have long noted the general reluctance of Frankfurt School thinkers to deal with these issues in an explicit, sustained fashion,[7] but it is now increasingly being discussed internally as a problem. In particular, the recent contributions of Thomas McCarthy (2009) and Amy Allen (2016) have posed this absence as a problem and suggested ways to open Frankfurt School theory to these concerns. Both are concerned primarily with the commitment held by many Frankfurt School thinkers to a strong account of progress, which is often identified as problematic for examining decolonising and anti-imperial struggles.

Firstly, Thomas McCarthy explores what a critical theory of neo-racism and development might look like in his recent *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*. McCarthy

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[5] There are, of course, many more examples. To name but a few, we might think of struggles for reparations and apologies for past acts of violence, such as compensation from Britain for Mau Mau victims, campaigns in the US for reparations for slavery, campaigns against the celebration of colonial history, such as Abolish Columbus Day, or against the portrayal of 'Black Pete' in the Netherlands, struggles to reconsider the legacy of prominent local figures such as slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol (see https://counteringcolston.wordpress.com/who-was-edward-colston-2. Accessed: 18 July 2018) not to mention the colonial dimension of the Israel-Palestine dispute.

[6] In making this claim, we should be careful not to overlook the work done by theorists influenced by the Frankfurt School but who are not situated centrally within it. See for instance the work of Lucius Outlaw, Tommie Shelby and Antonio Vázquez-Arroyo.

[7] For instance, Said wrote that Frankfurt School Critical Theory 'is stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-imperialist resistance, oppositional practice in the empire' (Said, 1994: 357).

examines in detail the history of the concept of development, from Kantian and Hegelian Universal History, to the idea of progress in the discourses of liberal imperialism, to discourses of progress and development since the Second World War. He argues that a:

> critical theory of development has to remain aware of the horrors historically perpetrated in the name of human development and to struggle consciously against the ambiguities and dangers inherent in developmental modes of thought. At the same time, it cannot deny the evident advance of human learning in numerous domains and the enhancement of our capacity to cope with a variety of problems… we are all moderns in an important sense… The question now for societies all over the world is not whether or not to modernise, but which forms of modernity to develop, in light of structural constraints and pressures emanating from the global system. (McCarthy, 2009: 233)

McCarthy deals sensitively with the issues of race and development, acknowledging the way in which progress has been used particularly in the colonial context in order to perpetrate acts of violence, cruelty and injustice. He tries to incorporate the critiques made in other disciplinary areas such as critical race theory or postcolonial studies as they pertain to progress and development. Yet ultimately he defends one of the core intuitions at the heart of critical theory: the belief in progress and an historical learning-process, particularly in relation to the development of reason.[8]

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[8] Whilst I am unconvinced McCarthy goes far enough, his book represents a welcome and important attempt to consider the relatively neglected issues of empire, race and progress within the framework of Frankfurt School Critical Theory. He offers a nuanced account of development, acknowledging its ambiguous legacy and examining the injustices to which it has contributed. This is one of the main reasons that I consider McCarthy's politics of memory in the first chapter.

Amy Allen takes a more radical approach in her important recent work, *The End of Progress*. The critical aim of her book, she suggests, is to 'expose the extent to which [the] project [of critical theory] is implicated at the theoretical level, by virtue of its commitment to a certain understanding of history, in the very imperialism that it condemns politically' (Allen, 2016: 5-6). It demonstrates how certain second, third and fourth generation critical theorists are committed, at the meta-normative level, to what she argues is a problematic conception of progress.[9] If her critique can be upheld, then Critical Theory's silence on questions of race and empire would be motivated. This would mean not only that Critical Theory is unsuited to analysing those struggles of the age concerned with contesting legacies of empire. More seriously, she suggests, it is itself so problematically entangled that it requires *decolonising* to be fit for purpose in general. The 'positive' aim of her book, then, is to contribute to this 'decolonisation' of critical theory and open it up to the aims and concerns of post- and de-colonial thought (ibid., xii). This is attempted by developing an alternative contextualist form of normativity using Adorno and Foucault, which does not rely on what she argues constitutes a problematic account of 'backwards-looking progress.'[10]

Whilst McCarthy's work has largely been well received, at least in Critical Theory circles, Allen's work has provoked a great deal of debate, some of it extremely hostile, and from opposing directions. Allen foresaw such diverse responses, due to the framing of the project (ibid., xv). For Frankfurt School and other more 'mainstream' theorists her

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[9] See chapter two, part two for a more detailed account and critical discussion of what she calls 'backwards-looking progress.'

[10] This also means that the McCarthy compromise is, for Allen, insufficient to 'decolonise critical theory.' The more modest, nuanced and critical view of progress he argues for is, she suggests, still open to the same problems highlighted by de- and post-colonial writers. Most significantly, his account leaves out the idea that we might need to un-learn aspects of our own view in order to engage in a genuinely open debate with others about global modernity (Allen, 2016: 30). For more on 'unlearning our own values,' see chapter two, part two.

critique is often dismissed as too radical, incoherent and dangerously complicit with relativism. For example, some critics have argued that Allen not only misunderstands and misrepresents at least certain members of the Frankfurt School,[11] they also suggest her critique of progress is confused, contradictory and politically unhelpful (Robbins, 2016; Davenport).

In the other direction, however, thinkers already persuaded by the critique of progress and Eurocentrism argue Allen's critique does not go far enough. These critics tend to accept the need to decolonise Critical Theory as 'much needed' (Leeb in Allen *et al.*, 2016: 772) or as a 'clear, forceful and convincing argument' (Kramer, 2017: 357) but question the Eurocentric limits of Allen's own project (Sager, 2017). Leeb, for example, queries Allen's turn to Adorno and Foucault and wonders whether:

> instead of drawing on two white, male European thinkers who have their own problems with Eurocentrism, which Allen also notes, what about if she had taken one or perhaps even two post- or de-colonial feminist theorists, to construct her alternative theoretical framework? (Allen *et al*, 2018: 778)

For these thinkers, her aims are likely to seem so commonplace, mundane – and indeed, in her insistence upon providing normative foundations, so conservative – that it remains 'mysterious as to why people looking to move beyond Eurocentrism ought to engage with critical theory' in the first place (Sager, 2017). After all, we could simply reject Frankfurt School Critical Theory outright as a suitable tool for emancipatory theoretical work into decolonising struggles. Postcolonial thinkers have mostly ignored the Frankfurt School and many have made use of alternative resources, especially from the

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[11] See, for example, Davenport on Allen's assessment of McCarthy.

French tradition, with thinkers such as Said, Spivak and Bhabha clearly influenced by Foucault and Derrida. Alternatively we might take a decolonial approach, as preferred[12] by Walter Mignolo amongst others, which moves away from knowledge produced in the global north and starts instead from knowledge located in the global south (Mignolo, 2011: 55). From this perspective, we might reframe Allen's dispute with McCarthy as less concerned with whether one should reform or reject central tenants of Critical Theory, than with the more familiar (and, we might add, *family*) disputes between, on the one hand, first and second generation Frankfurt School theorists and, on the other, between French and German theory.[13]

This project responds to issues raised by McCarthy and Allen in a number of ways. Like both thinkers, I am interested in how critical theory can respond to decolonising and anti-imperial 'struggles of the age'. I follow both in suggesting that Frankfurt School Critical Theory has thus far been inadequately attentive to these issues. However, unlike McCarthy and Allen, my focus is not explicitly on the issue of progress.[14] I focus rather on limitations to recent theorisations of three separate emancipatory practices: the

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[12] I say preferred, rather than argued for, since Mignolo advocates an 'objectivity in parenthesis' by which he means that all views are equally valid (2011: 27).

[13] There is, however, an important difference from the earlier debate dispute between Foucault and Habermas insofar as the motivating concerns arise from concerns raised primarily – but not solely – by thinkers and activists working outside the European and North American contexts.

[14] In a sense, however, a critique of a certain, limited notion of progress runs through this thesis. Rancière's conception of political emancipation rejects a notion of slow, cumulative, progressive change. Kristin Ross sees a parallel in Rancière's thought with Benjamin's critique that 'the concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogenous, empty time' (cited in Ross in IS: xxi). Yet, as I discuss in chapter two, improvements in what he calls the 'police' or social order can be discerned through the number of 'egalitarian inscriptions' – what we might describe as 'traces' of previous emancipatory acts – which appear there. These do not confer equality as a substantial property on individuals but rather function as tools for further acts of politics. As such, Rancière cannot be seen to entirely reject what Allen calls 'backwards-looking progress' but for him, it is located in the traces of disruptive political moments rather than cumulative progressive change. See chapter two, part three.

politics of memory; struggles for recognition; and what I call emancipatory educational practices, drawing on examples from decolonisation struggles. In each case I suggest Frankfurt School theorisations of these practices downplay or often miss what I call an 'aesthetic' dimension.[15] Due to this absence, I argue these practices are inadequately theorised by the Frankfurt School thinkers I study and that this prevents them from effectively responding to challenges raised through these struggles.[16]

Like Allen and McCarthy, I suggest there are resources within the western tradition to respond to these issues. This is not because I think there is nowhere except the global north from which critical thought can come. Indeed it seems an urgent contemporary task not only to place Anglo-American and European critical theory in greater conversation with post- and de-colonial approaches, but for theorists located in the global north to take these approaches seriously in their own right. Nevertheless, this is not that project. Partly this choice is a reflection of specialisation. But I think it can also be justified by refusing to reject the entire western tradition and instead examining which resources exist *within* that tradition to respond to challenges raised from locations outside it. For Vázquez-Arroyo, certain 'neo-nativist' critiques of Eurocentrism are wrong to claim that 'once an idea crystallises in Europe, it is either fully formed, or ultimately shackled by its locus of origin, and not subject to change or completion by transcultural encounter' (2018: 59). He argues this occludes careful consideration of the way in which concepts acquire and lose their determinations in different locations and historical situations. Instead he argues that we require 'a scrupulously differentiated reconstruction

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[15] See the next section for a detailed account of 'aesthetic emancipation'.

[16] This is not to claim that only decolonizing and anti-imperial struggles have an aesthetic dimension. Far from it: for Rancière, as we will see, politics is 'aesthetic in principle'. This means that many of the conclusions I reach will be more widely applicable. However, the examples I examine are all taken from these decolonising struggles. For more on the selection of the examples, see the final section in the conclusion.

of how ideas and concepts evolve and unfold in the context of complex historical concatenations' (ibid.).[17] This means there is no necessary reason to move outside of European thought or to presume that ideas – simply because they have emerged in Europe – will necessarily be tinged with the traces of colonialism.

However, unlike McCarthy and Vázquez-Arroyo,[18] I suggest looking beyond the Frankfurt School to overlaps with French critical theory. Here I want to take a path similar to Allen's insofar as I also look to the interaction between French and Frankfurt School versions of critical theory.[19] Frankfurt School Critical Theory[20] can be defined as the attempt to walk a precarious line between descriptive social science and normative political philosophy (Ingram, 1990: xxi). On this definition, Critical Theory seeks, through an interdisciplinary approach of social science and philosophy, to produce an evaluative and not simply descriptive account of society. At the same time, it does not start from abstract norms or ideals, as we find in ideal theory, but rather from the actual, historically variable conditions of that society (Ingram, 1990: xxiii). This, it is hoped, allows the theory not only to better connect with the emancipatory interest actually existing within a given society, but also to remain ruthlessly critical of its own entanglements within that society. Critical Theorists, particularly those working in the

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[17] I suggest that paying attention to the way concepts change could include – although is broader than – Rancière's work on the way political subjects extend and change the meaning of concepts through dis-agreement. See also Rancière's disruptive use of concepts discussed in the conclusion.

[18] Yet they do so for different reasons. McCarthy defends a stricter form of normativity and progress than Vázquez-Arroyo who is opposed not to Allen's critical project but her positive, decolonial project. Like Allen, Vázquez-Arroyo advocates a turn to Adorno and the first generation, but without supplementation from Foucault.

[19] Allen has focused in particular on combining the insights of Frankfurt School Critical Theory with the critical approaches of Foucault and Butler (Allen, 2013; 2016).

[20] Note that in this thesis, Critical Theory, capitalized in this way, always refers specifically to Frankfurt School Critical Theory.

Habermasian and Honnethian traditions, are also concerned to justify their own normative commitments in a way which is not relativistic.[21]

However, like Allen, I see no reason to narrowly restrict ourselves to Frankfurt School Critical Theory and instead welcome the expansion of what counts as critical theory (Allen, 2016: 2). As such, I suggest we use Jean-Philippe Deranty's alternative, broader definition, which defines critical theory as:

> [a] field occupied by thinkers working mainly with references in European philosophy who conduct their work on social and political issues in direct connection with real existing social and historical phenomena. In that style of "philosophical critique," theoretical work draws from the empirical realities of social and historical developments; and in turn, one of its main objectives is to provide analytical tools to articulate the criticism of some of these social developments. The substantial methodological connection to social reality and to history distinguishes it from "normative political philosophy." And this form of critical theory can be distinguished from conservative critique because the work of critique is driven by the desire to change society in order to fulfil a universalistic commitment to "emancipation." (Deranty in RoD: 35-36)

Here too we have critical theory located between conservative critiques and ideal theory, but lacking a strong emphasis on universal normative justifications. By working with such a definition we are better placed to examine the interactions between Frankfurt School theory and its 'cousins' outside.

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[21] This proves extremely difficult when one starts from a particular historical social constellation. Whether such a precarious position can be convincingly maintained is a central question of Critical Theory.

Yet I do not, like Allen, go as far as to suggest that the analysis presented here contributes to what might be termed a 'decolonisation' of Frankfurt School Critical Theory. Partly this is due to the different focus of our respective projects. The shortcomings I highlight with Frankfurt School Critical Theory are not fundamental, meta-theoretical commitments, as we find in Allen's rejection of Critical Theory's normative grounding. Rather they are omissions which I suggest can often be supplemented, albeit precariously, by work attentive to the aesthetic dimension of politics which I explore throughout this project. That is to say, in this work, I will not sufficiently prove Frankfurt School Critical Theory is 'colonised' – instead of simply incomplete – in order to justify its 'decolonisation.' But I am also wary of presuming to contribute to 'decolonising' ends without a more detailed critical engagement with what precisely decolonisation entails. Vázquez-Arroyo has convincingly suggested that Allen's decolonising claim is based on a limited and rather uncritical understanding of postcolonial theory in its mainstream version – associated with names like Spivak, Said or the coloniality/modernity paradigm of Mignolo and Quijano (2017: S225-S226).[22] Allen tends to present the field of postcolonial studies as unified in its critique of progress and it is true that she does not sufficiently analyse its deeply contested nature.[23] One would therefore need to do more work to demonstrate her proposed solution would constitute a 'decolonising' of Critical Theory. Likewise, this project would require a deeper and more sustained engagement with the broad post-colonial and de-colonial traditions to

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[22] Indeed, a common complaint is that Allen does not engage deeply enough with the internally contested field of postcolonial studies, on which she relies (see for example Sager, 2017; Winter in Allen *et al.*, 2018: 786).

[23] Her response is that, for the narrow purposes of her specific decolonising aim, her engagement with postcolonial and decolonial thought was sufficient, since 'the critique of the narrative of European-modernity as progress is a thread that runs through a wide range of texts and authors in post- and de-colonial theory – even if it is articulated in a variety of ways in this literature and even if these theorists draw distinct conclusions from it' (Allen *et al.*, 2018: 792).

fully demonstrate *that* the consideration of aesthetic emancipation contributes to what is in fact an extremely disputed decolonising programme.[24] Yet I am not rejecting what Vázquez-Arroyo dismisses as the 'decolonising moniker' outright.[25] Rather, I am addressing one limitation of Critical Theory's consideration of decolonising and anti-imperial struggles but without making the stronger claim that this amounts to an unambiguous decolonisation of Critical Theory.

Aesthetic emancipation

Whilst Allen places Frankfurt School thinkers in conversation with Michel Foucault in order to rethink normativity, I look to the work of Jacques Rancière to reconsider political practices. I am interested specifically in what we might call his account of 'aesthetic emancipation,' predominantly although not exclusively in its political form.

Aesthetics lies at the heart of Rancière's account of radical democratic politics. Indeed, he argues that politics is 'aesthetic in principle' (D: 58). But to properly understand the

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[24] For example, in chapter two, I discuss Simpson and Coulthard's critiques of 'liberal colonialism' and a 'politics of refusal' without considering in more detail the Indigenous Studies debate to which these authors are contributing. Similarly, in chapter three, I discuss the ways in which Rancière's work on education highlights a missed dimension of Paulo Freire's work without a deeper consideration of the ways in which Freire's work has been received by critical pedagogues, the Philosophy of Liberation or within postcolonial studies. Whilst I defend the use of the resources I have selected as important and relevant contributions, I accept they cannot be seen as adequate to claim my intervention counts as an uncontested example of decolonization.

[25] He argues that Allen's positive project resulted in 'uncritical embracing of idealist bromides' and that 'any theory which purports to be critical should be extremely wary of thought forms whose sediments and de-differentiations, along with neo-nativist gestures and inane ideas of decolonisation, undermine genuine critique' (Vázquez-Arroyo, 2017: S226-S227). I offer a response to this critique in chapter two, part two.

claim, both terms 'aesthetic' and 'politics' here must be understood in a particular sense.[26] 'Aesthetic' does not refer narrowly to a particular appreciation of art. Neither does the claim refer to Benjamin's claim that politics had been aestheticized in the modern era (PA: 8). Rather, aesthetic here should be understood in a broad sense as concerned with sense experience. Rancière writes that: 'If the reader is fond of analogy, aesthetics can be understood in a Kantian sense – re-examined perhaps by Foucault – as the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience' (ibid.). In this sense, aesthetics is concerned with what can be seen and heard and *how* it is seen and heard; what is visible and what is invisible; what counts as speech and what counts as noise. It is concerned, above all, with what Rancière calls a 'distribution of the sensible' (*partage du sensible*). I examine this term in more detail in chapter one[27] but very briefly, the *'sensible'* should be understood both as what we sense and what makes sense to us (as sense experience and understanding[28]) and *'partage'* should be understood according to both its French meanings as divided and shared. A distribution of the sensible, then, concerns what we see and understand as belonging to the common world, as well as the way in which those object belong to the common world, the place they occupy and the way in which they count.[29]

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[26] Indeed, as will be clear throughout this project, a careful defining and re-defining of terms is key to understanding Rancière's project, due to his emphasis on disagreement. See below and chapter one, part two.

[27] See chapter one, part two.

[28] For a definition and discussion of Rancière's concept of understanding, see chapter three, part one.

[29] Rancière writes: 'I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. The apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution' (PA: 7).

Politics, meanwhile, should be understood in a far narrower sense than in more typical definitions.[30] It is concerned specifically with disruptions to the existing distribution of the sensible through the appearance of a political subject which does not belong to it[31] and does not make sense within it. It is this disruption of the existing aesthetic distribution which is key to defining politics for Rancière. An action or 'demonstration is political not because it occurs in a particular place and bears upon a particular object but rather because its form is that of a clash between two partitions of the sensible' (DIS: 39). Specifically, politics 'consists in making what was unseen visible; in making what was audible as mere noise heard as speech and in demonstrating that what appeared as a mere expression of pleasure and pain is a shared feeling of a good or an evil' (ibid., 38). It occurs, as such, precisely where one does not expect to find it.

As I explore in chapter one, Rancièrian politics is enacted by a subject which does not make sense, and technically speaking does not exist,[32] in the current distribution. Through their appearance they disrupt the existing distribution. These political figures are given various names by Rancière but are most frequently called the 'part without a part'.[33] Since the political subject does not exist and her speech does not *count* in the existing distribution, she cannot simply speak or act and be taken to do so. As such, for Rancière, there are three criteria which must be in place for a political subject to appear

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[30] Most of what we normally take politics to consist in is redefined by Rancière as the 'police.' See chapter one, part two; chapter two, part four; and the conclusion for further discussion of this term.

[31] At least, it does not belong to it insofar it is in the wrong 'place'.

[32] Since she has 'moved out of place', Rancière's political subject is not displaying an existing identity but takes on an 'impossible subjectivity' which does not exist in the current distribution. For more on this, see chapter one, part two. See also chapter two, part four for a reconsideration of Rancière's disidentification condition.

[33] For a consideration of the 'part without a part' as the 'poor', see the end of this introduction and the conclusion.

(WIS: 212-213). [34] Firstly, she must build a stage on which to speak. Secondly, she disidentifies from her existing role and takes on an 'impossible subjectivity.' It is an impossible subjectivity insofar as the part without a part 'puts two worlds in one' – the world where they do not exist and the world where they do, acting and speaking before us. This is what Rancière calls a dissensus (DIS: 38). Thirdly, in order to do so, she acts on what Rancière calls a presupposition of equality. [35] In demonstrating her equality, the political subject disrupts the social order in which she was seen as unequal. Indeed, the role of equality is so central to Rancière's work, he has recently taken to describing his method as a 'method of equality' (FRM, ME).

The appearance of the political subject – and in particular the disruptive appearance of her speech *qua* speech – is therefore key to Rancière's account of politics. [36] It is, indeed, no coincidence that his most famous work on politics, entitled *Disagreement,* refers precisely to this form of speech. A disagreement, for Rancière, is a dispute in which two interlocutors use the same word but fail to see the same object designated by it. It is not when one says 'black' and the other says 'white', but when both say 'white' and mean something different by it. At its most extreme, a speaker fails to see his interlocutor as speaking meaningfully at all: as engaged in a legitimate dispute (D: xi-xii). In such a situation, a subject who wishes to talk 'out of place' must force her speech to be heard through an act of politics.

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[34] Note that I discuss these criteria in more detail in chapter one, part two. I also analyse all three criteria in relation to Audra Simpson's 'I am a Mohawk!' claim in chapter two, part four.
[35] For a detailed discussion of the presupposition of equality as equal intelligence, see chapter three, part one.
[36] For more on the political subject as a speaking being, see chapter three, parts one and two.

Emancipation then, for Rancière, is concerned with appearing out of place, shifting the distribution through disagreement and unsettling the way one is seen and understood. I investigate it primarily in its political form, although I also discuss intellectual emancipation in chapter three and the aesthetic dimension of critique in the conclusion.[37] Significantly, such emancipatory work cannot, for Rancière, be done to or for someone else. It is self-emancipation and it is an action. Rancière is concerned, then, with political practices as undertaken by the oppressed or the 'part without a part' in order to effect their own appearing.

Many theorists have already recognised Rancière's critique as productive and useful for theorising a broad range of struggles, including those confronting the legacy of empire. This means that, although Rancière is not (and should not be) considered a 'post-colonial' thinker, there is considerable precedent for developing his political insights into areas which go well beyond his own examples.[38] Todd May (2010), for example, argues that the Zapatista represent an exemplary case of Rancièrian political actors. For May, the Zapatista do not act on the basis of a political identity, but 'because of the *equality* of indigenous people,' which has allowed them to 'remain at once rooted in local customs

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[37] However, these forms of emancipation are not strictly political for Rancière, since there is no appearance of a political subject. For an emancipatory act to count as *political*, Rancière argues the appearance of this subject – this part without a part – is vital. I will contest this claim in the conclusion.

[38] Indeed, sometimes it is extended into areas into which he has expressed reluctance to go there. For example, although Rancière himself explicitly rejected queer theory, Samuel Chambers (2013) and Oliver Davis (2009) have both sought to link the latter with Rancière's politics. Chambers argues that Rancièrian democratic politics highlights what is distinct about queer politics vis-à-vis lesbian and gay identity politics, and argues that Ranciere's miscount 'proves to be a queer miscount' (Chambers, 2013: 158). Davis, meanwhile, turns to Rancière's early work and argues that the concept of 'irritable attachment' found in *Les Révoltes Logiques* is 'at once a distinctively queer and a characteristically Rancièrian form of relationality' which better capture our 'affect-laden and embodied social and political experience than "disagreement" and "dissensus"' (Davis, 2009: 2).

and capable of addressing issues that concern everyone on the planet' (ibid., 78).[39] Pirsoul agrees that 'the Zapatista are a perfect embodiment of the ideal of demos theorised by Rancière' due to their:

> successful articulation of ethnic (indigenous), subaltern, national and international identities… their struggle is rooted in the denial of recognition experienced by a particular (indigenous) identity but cannot be reduced to the political affirmation of the attributes of that identity.' (Pirsoul, 2017: 257)

More generally, he argues that Rancière's work helps us understand the dilemma facing indigenous politics around the world, to which different groups respond in different ways (ibid., 253). I discuss indigenous politics and the connection between political action and identity in more detail in chapter two.

Critical security scholars, meanwhile, have applied Rancière's work to the context of migration. Rigby and Schlembach, for example, have argued that the political issue in the Calais Jungle can be understood in Rancièrian terms as a struggle over the very existence of politics: 'whether or not migration could be a site of politics at all' (2013: 162). In response to this question, they have identified certain small-scale acts of successful dissensus. For example, an interviewee's protest 'are we not humans, are we not all brothers?' is interpreted as a claim to speak 'in place of *anyone.*' He does so, moreover, on the basis of an assumed 'universal' equality which 'sovereignty cannot tolerate' since it is made 'across, or in spite of the citizen/non-citizen divide' (ibid., 164). Puggioni, meanwhile, discusses how the solidarity expressed by Italian citizens with migrants in the

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[39] He sees the Zapatista as combining equality and identity, but in cases of conflict, equality takes precedence (May, 2010: 91).

wake of the Lampedusa disaster should be understood as an act of dissensus. She argues the Italians acted like the French citizens, discussed by Rancière, who disidentified with their social location in response to the killing of Algerians in 1961 and took on a new political subjectivity (Puggioni, 2015: 1154; D: 139).

As a final example, Havercroft and Owen (2016) have sought to link Rancière's work on dissensus with Cavell's notion of 'soul blindness' in order to understand what is at stake in the Black Lives Matter movement.[40] They argue that such acts prompt a process of 'soul dawning' through which we come to acknowledge the humanity of others as of the same nature as our own. Thus whilst Rancière's work might be seen as antithetical to some readings of the Black Lives Matter movement due to what Toscano (2011) calls his 'anti-sociology,'[41] Havercroft and Owen argue, on the contrary, that his notion of aesthetic appearance is important for understanding certain political actions undertaken by the movement as well as analysing which forms an appropriate white response might take.

Building on this work, I suggest that Rancière's conceptualisation of aesthetic emancipatory practice contributes to critical theory by helping us better understand three political practices, which I study specifically in relation to how they are carried out in specific decolonising and anti-imperial struggles. Put negatively, Rancière allows us to identify ways in which the aesthetic dimension of political practice has been downplayed or ignored by recent Frankfurt School theorists in their theorisation of these practices. Put positively, his work is a starting point for theorising these practices anew.

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[40] They are not the only theorists to link Rancière and Cavell (see, for example, Norval, 2012 and Woodford, 2017: 90-116). I briefly discuss Norval's use of Cavell in chapter two, part five.

[41] See the end of the introduction for a brief discussion of Toscano (2011) and McNay's (2014) related critique of Rancière's theory as 'socially weightless.'

Specifically, I make the following claims. In the first chapter I show that Rancière's account of aesthetic emancipation allows us to identify a form of political speech[42] missed or marginalised by deliberative theorists and argue that this has consequences for the politics of memory which McCarthy develops. I then develop an account of a 'Rancièrian' politics of memory which focuses on this form of political speech, which I suggest has implications both for understanding and identifying neglected past acts of emancipation as well as contributing to present and future emancipatory work. In the second chapter, I argue that Rancière's account of disagreement allows us to theorise certain struggles for 'recognition'[43] without relying on the 'reconciliatory' tendencies which haunt the account of the Frankfurt School's most prominent recent theorist of recognition struggles, Axel Honneth. I argue this gives us a better model for understanding certain indigenous struggles, including those which fall under what Audra Simpson (2014) calls a politics of refusal. In the third chapter, I examine the implications of Rancière's account of equal intelligence and critique of stultification for emancipatory educational practices, in relation to both critical pedagogies and critical social theory. I argue that he points us towards positive educational practices missed by theorists who 'presuppose inequality'[44] which can encourage the up-take of aesthetic emancipatory action, both in its intellectual and political forms. But I also suggest his critique demonstrates how certain 'explanations of inequality'[45] can work actively against the uptake of specifically aesthetic acts of emancipation. However, to make this case, I develop a more nuanced account of 'explanation' than is found in Rancière's own work.

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[42] Specifically, this is the speech of those Rancière calls the 'part with no part'.

[43] Recognition here remains in scare quotes, since it is a very particular – although I suggest still meaningful and important – conception of recognition.

[44] For a detailed account of 'presupposing inequality', see the discussion of Rancière's critique of stultification in chapter three, part two.

[45] See chapter three, parts two and four.

Between Rancière and the Frankfurt School

But whilst I suggest this gives us a reason to turn to Rancière's account of aesthetic emancipation, why precisely do we need a conversation between Rancière and the Frankfurt School? That is to say, why do I not simply examine Rancière's contribution to conceptualising emancipatory practices? I suggest this is not adequate for at least three reasons.

Firstly, I suggest encounters between thinkers – here specifically between Rancière and recent members of the Frankfurt School – can help further the practice of critical theory more generally. As Genel says, in relation to a recent debate between Rancière and Honneth:

> The discussion that took place highlights a difference in the theoretical approaches concerning the identification of what is at play in the transformation of society and how such transformation might work, the nature of the social field and its relation to the political, and eventually the very logic of emancipation. It is precisely the differences between Rancière and Honneth that could generate a productive confrontation. By confronting these two influential, divergent critical models, the discussion we propose here and the comparative study we try to initiate highlights in return a number of key aporias that are specific to each thinking but that are also revealed as key stakes in the general project of "critical theory." (Genel in RoD: 19)

I agree with Genel that it is important not to seek a 'forced reconciliation' but rather that points of overlap and disagreement can open new pathways for the continued

development of critical theory. Thus this approach could potentially help us not only better understand Rancière, and offer the most plausible account of his thought, but ultimately to move beyond a limited Rancièrian or Frankfurt School critical theory to potentially open up new directions for critical thought.

Indeed, to this end, there has been a growing conversation between German and French theory in recent years.[46] This project contributes to that discussion although in so doing it moves against the more prevalent trend of bringing French theorists and the Frankfurt School together by focusing on the first generation. These connections can be seen, for instance, in Derrida's reference to his 'adoptive father' Adorno which led Deranty to term him 'Adorno's other son' (alongside Habermas). Amy Allen builds on this reference when she calls Foucault 'Adorno's other "other son"' (Allen, 2016: 250, N1). Critics too have noted the similarities between early Frankfurt School theorists and French thought. For instance, Bronner complains that:

> "Negative dialectics" anticipated many concerns associated with postmodernism and poststructuralism. So much so, in fact, that they are now often treated as expressions of critical theory. Deconstructive or poststructuralist approaches invaded the most prestigious journals and disciplines ranging … [and] critical theory lost its ability to offer an integrated critique of society, conceptualise a meaningful politics, and project new ideals of liberation. Textual exegesis, cultural preoccupations, and metaphysical disputations increasingly turned critical theory into a victim of its own success. The result has been an enduring identity crisis. (Bronner, 2011: 7-8)

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[46] See, for instance, an overview by Genel in RoD: 16-18, as well as the bibliography to RoD.

For critics and advocates alike, links are very often made between French thought and first generation Frankfurt School theorists. By contrast, perhaps as a result of the seemingly intractable debate between Habermas and Foucault, later Frankfurt School theorists are often seen to have moved decisively away from French theory. This project claims, however, that productive links can also be made between an admittedly atypical representative of French thought, Jacques Rancière, and *recent* Frankfurt School thinkers.

The reason for this shift in emphasis is the focus on political practice. As I have suggested, Rancière is well known for his attention to the self-emancipatory actions of often-overlooked political subjects. This distances him significantly from many first generation theorists who have often been criticised for exaggerating the agency-inhibiting effects of oppressive structures. Adorno's 'totally administered society,' for example, focuses on domination from above, leaving little space for the role of struggles from below.[47] Even (at least the early) Habermas has been criticised for emphasising system-theoretic concepts and assumptions at the expense of engagement with the practical activity of social agents which tend 'to recede into the background' (McCarthy cited in Held, 1997: 374). Indeed, in 1980, Held could argue that one of the major unresolved problems with Critical Theory was that it 'offer[ed] a theory of the importance of fundamental social transformation which has little basis in social struggle' (ibid., 399).

More recent Critical Theory, by contrast, seems to have moved towards Rancière. We have already seen evidence of this shift in Fraser's description of critical theory as 'the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age' (1985: 97). Here she can be seen

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[47] For Held, this is the result of trying to understand why Marx's predicted revolution had not happened in the West, which led to an over-emphasis on the system's ability to absorb opposition (Held, 1997: 399).

to have switched focus from structures of domination towards the role of agents counteracting these structures. Honneth, whose work I examine in chapter two, explicitly formulates his critical theory as a response to Habermas' tendency to focus on processes which go on 'behind the backs of the subjects involved' (Honneth, 2007: 70). Rahel Jaeggi, whose work I discuss in chapter three, argues for an ideology critique which rejects elitism and inegalitarianism (Jaeggi, 2009), whilst Robin Celikates sees social critique as not categorically different from ordinary, everyday practices of criticism (Celikates, 2006: 36). As such, I examine the work of these more recent third and fourth generation theorists who, like Rancière, place greater emphasis on the role of political actors engaged in struggle.

Focusing on the potential overlaps between Rancière and these more recent Frankfurt School thinkers is, I suggest, an important shift in emphasis given the sometimes misleading polemical and adversarial tone of Rancière's critiques. When discussing other theorists, he tends to present his comments as disagreements and places little value on providing a charitable, contextualised account of their views.[48] For example, despite little direct engagement with Habermas' texts, the third chapter of *Disagreement* is best read as an extended critique of the latter's account of understanding. Indeed, elsewhere he dismisses in a few sentences what he calls the 'tradition of critique' in its entirety for its 'demystifying' pretensions (DW: 114).[49] Yet focusing on disagreement means that important points of overlap often go unrecognised. Here we might follow the lead of theorists who have studied the relationship between Rancière and another of his arch-

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[48] He beings his encounter with Honneth with the explicit claim that, 'to bear any fruit, the encounter must identify its point of "disagreement." Accordingly I will try to identify the kind of disagreement between *recognition* and *disagreement* that can make the discussion fruitful' (RoD: 83).

[49] In chapter three, part four, I offer a more nuanced account of explanation in order to demonstrate how certain forms of 'critique' are not necessarily incompatible with Rancière's presupposition of equality. See also the conclusion.

foes, Pierre Bourdieu – whom he castigates as the 'sociologist king' (PP: 165-202) – and who have suggested there is more 'common ground' between the thinkers than Rancière's critique suggests (Sonderegger, 2012: 257; see Nordmann, 2006 for an attempt to partially reconcile their accounts).[50]

A notable gap in the literature suggests that the presumption of irreconcilability seems to have been a particular problem for theorising the relation between disagreement and deliberative theory.[51] Theorists on both sides seem to have accepted the divide: either agreeing with Rancière's quick dismissal of Habermas or, amongst deliberative theorists, failing to consider it as worthy of a response in the first place. Building on the work of Russell and Montin (2015), who represent a welcome exception to this trend, I not only seek to clarify Rancière's disagreement with Habermas but also argue that there may be a higher degree of compatibility between disagreement and deliberation than is commonly recognised.[52]

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[50] Indeed, as Ruth Sonderegger points out, Rancière himself recognized this overlap. She writes: 'In his Preface to the second French edition of *The Philosopher and His Poor* Rancière admits that in some sense Bourdieu persistently said what he himself had tried to point out in criticizing Bourdieu. When they once met at a conference, Rancière reports, Bourdieu felt obliged to warn his audience that he, contrary to what they might believe, would say the exact opposite of what Rancière would say' (Sonderegger, 2012: 261).

[51] It may also reflect the continued reverberations of the Foucault-Habermas debate. For how this might affect comparative work investigating the Frankfurt School and Rancière, see Deranty in RoD: 80.

[52] In particular see chapter one, parts two and five. Although this is the only explicit discussion of the relationship between deliberation and disagreement in this thesis, it can be seen to run as a theme throughout. In chapter two, for instance, I discuss the relationship between politics and the police into which he 'relegates' almost all elements of deliberative politics. Following Chambers, I stress not only the importance of the police, but also the fact there is greater continuity between the two spheres than is often appreciated. This also means there is greater overlap between radical democratic politics and deliberation than we might think. In chapter three, part three, I discuss a possible Rancièrian emancipatory educational practice which operates in emancipatory networks and which may also be seen to have greater links to deliberative processes. Finally, in the conclusion, I argue that by understanding what the concepts 'politics' and 'police' do in

By contrast, there has been more interest in connections between French thought and Honnethian recognition theory. In the introduction to their recent edited collection, Miriam Bankovsky and Alice Le Goff argue that French theory has already impacted the development of recognition theories, and that it could continue to influence its development in a number of fruitful ways (2012: 3). Surprisingly, however, there was no discussion of Rancière in the collection. Yet the fact there are interesting parallels between disagreement and recognition was brought out in a recent debate between Rancière and Honneth, which has been published with introductions by Jean-Philippe Deranty and Katia Genel (RoD). Indeed, Deranty has even claimed that Rancière is a 'critical participant in the ethics of recognition'[53] (Deranty, 2003a: 153).

There is also, more generally, growing interest in the parallels between critical social theory and Rancière's thought – despite Rancière's dismissal of the 'demystifying' tradition of critique. As I discuss in chapter three, Robin Celikates attempts to think a critical social theory without an epistemological break between theorist and those he studies and he has written directly on Rancière (Celikates, 2014). As such this project contributes to the growing, although as yet underdeveloped body of work examining the links between Rancière and recent Frankfurt School thinkers, not to force two incompatible accounts into reconciliation, but to read them together, productively.

Rancière's work, we can offer a defence of the political nature of deliberation, perhaps against Rancière but in a Rancièrian spirit.

[53] I examine this claim further in chapter two, part three. Briefly, although I think Deranty, particularly in this early essay, assimilates Rancière too closely into a Honnethian paradigm, I do think it is true that Rancière can offer us a plausible and helpful theory of a phenomenon recognisable as a certain form of 'recognition'.

This productive 'reading together' also contributes to the second reason for examining Rancière *with* the Frankfurt School: the way the latter help supplement his account. In particular, Rancière presents his account of political emancipation as if this were the only form politics can take. But a key claim of this project is that Rancièrian politics – or aesthetic emancipation – is not all there is. As I return to discuss in the conclusion, it is perhaps ironic that a thinker concerned with finding politics where it should not be is so concerned with defining what *counts as politics*. Of course, it is this insistence that allows him to identify these aesthetic, out-of-place acts of radical democratic politics in the first place, and I argue this focus is both useful and often overlooked. But I am less convinced that we should dismiss other *non-aesthetic* examples of what we might typically take to be political or emancipatory acts as *necessarily* non-political or non-emancipatory.

This position is reflected by conclusions reached in the three main chapters. In chapter one, I examine how Rancièrian politics potentially supplements deliberative accounts of democracy as well as examining the tensions between them. In chapter two, I do not claim that my account of a Rancièrian 'recognition' struggles is exhaustive. I accept that certain struggles do indeed aim at reconciliation and that these may be best analysed using Honneth's model. Moreover, whilst I would argue the latter are limited in an important sense, we should not rule out the possibility that they might produce certain emancipatory results. At the same time, I follow Samuel Chambers in re-evaluating the important and potentially emancipatory work which goes on in the 'police' sphere *on Rancière's own terms*. In chapter three, meanwhile, I argue that the critique of stultification only affects the promotion of aesthetic acts of emancipation and has no necessary impact on the uptake of other forms of emancipation. As such, more traditional explanatory pedagogies and social theories may continue to have other emancipatory effects beyond those investigated by Rancière.

Instead of seeing these moves as a partial rejection of Rancière, I suggest that moving beyond his critiques of other thinkers is important on his own terms. Indeed, as Tyson Lewis pointed out in his discussion of Rancière and Freire, we should be wary of 'transforming either figure into a "master" who can "explain" the flaws in his rival theorist' (Lewis, 2012: 13).[54] One can therefore move against Rancière but do so – in a phrase I use a few times in this thesis – in a Rancièrian spirit.

But this already points us towards the third reason for examining Rancière together with the Frankfurt School. If we refuse to treat Rancière as a 'master theorist,' then we should consider the limitations of his thought not only to supplement it but, where appropriate, to offer an alternative to it. Of course, sometimes the limitations of his thought turn out to be limitations of *readings* of his thought and in numerous instances I argue for a different *internal* reading in order to address criticisms he faces. For example, in chapter two, I offer a reading of Rancière's theory of disagreement in order to show how it might be considered a form of recognition. I also argue against what is often taken to be a sharp divide between politics and police in favour of a 'porous' account of the relationship between them. In chapter three, meanwhile, I give a defence of his account of equality as equal intelligence. However, in this thesis, I also consider two problems which are less easily resolved through a re-reading of Rancière: the demand for a political actor to undergo full dis-identification from her social role; and the dismissal of all forms of explanation as working against equality. The first modification forms part of a response to what critics have called Rancière's 'social weightlessness' due to the divide he appears to draw between the social world and political action (McNay 2014; see also

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[54] For more on the problem of explanation, see chapter three, parts two and four.

Toscano 2011; Celikates 2014).[55] The second represents a modification to his radical, productive but nonetheless problematic 'method of equality'.

In both of these cases, the alterations I propose to Rancière's account are partially motivated and inspired by the encounter with his Frankfurt School interlocutors. In contrast to Rancière's 'anti-sociology' (Toscano, 2011), Frankfurt School theorists have reflected at length on social theory and the connection between philosophy and sociology. Here, then, I have a similar motivation to Allen, who maintains her interest in Frankfurt School Critical Theory due to its 'emphasis on social theory and on the understanding of the social as the nexus of the political, the cultural, and the individual' (Allen, 2016: xiii). In chapter three, meanwhile, I show how Jaeggi's ideology critique and Celikates' critical social theory allow us to refine Rancière's critique of stultification by elaborating a more nuanced, differentiated account of 'explanation.'[56]

Rancière as critical theorist?

In short, then, I want to suggest that Rancière's conception of 'aesthetic emancipation' 1) is a productive and neglected way of thinking about three political practices *and* 2) can

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[55] 'Socially weightless' political theories are defined by McNay as sharing 'the catalyzing insight that some kind of withdrawal from the complexities and messiness of the social realm is vital in order to reflect properly on the independent political dynamics that form the grounds of a robust theory of democracy' (McNay, 2014: 3). In such theories, the political realm acquires its own logic and is given primacy over other social realms. Rancière is, for McNay, a socially weightless theorist par excellence due to the absence of a developed account of power and sociality in his work. She argues he 'adopts an "all or nothing" logic with regard to agency which is both theoretically naïve and politically ineffective' (ibid., 134).

[56] Although not specifically related to the Frankfurt School, I also suggest Freire's account of 'emancipating with' can help us respond to the unsustainable uni-directional account of emancipation provided by the ignorant schoolmaster to think through an account of emancipating networks.

offer either a supplement or an alternative to Frankfurt School theorisations of these practices *in a way which* 3) helps us better conceptualise how these practices are carried out, particularly in struggles concerned broadly with decolonisation *but* 4) only if certain modifications are made to his work. To make this argument, each chapter examines a different emancipatory practice. In some ways, then, the three chapters can be read as separate case studies, but as a whole they build an account of Rancière's contribution to critical theory and his contribution to conceptualising certain decolonising practices. I return to these two broader points in the conclusion.

In chapter one, I focus on the practice of the politics of memory. Arguing for the urgent task of imagining a politics of memory which contests the legacy of empire, at least in the British context, I examine which form such a politics of memory might take. I turn firstly to McCarthy's recent intervention which takes its inspiration from the German process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and applies it to the American context (2009: 96-127). For McCarthy, it is vital for a politics of memory to raise awareness of the historical roots of slavery underlying present-day racial disparity and injustice. Despite noting a few reservations about the move from the German to the American context, I largely endorse McCarthy's picture as a form of the politics of memory associated with a model of deliberative democracy and briefly suggest how it could perhaps be extended to the British context. However, there are limitations with his picture, I argue, which stem from the restricted picture of deliberative politics with which he works. In particular, I argue that deliberative theorists marginalise the political discourse of the 'part without a part' and are therefore inadequately attentive to the aesthetic form of politics analysed by Rancière. To make this argument, I examine and defend Rancière's poorly understood critique of Habermasian understanding.

I then turn to the implications of this critique for the politics of memory. I ask, firstly, what a Rancièrian politics of memory would look like: what form of history would be attentive to these out-of-place political actors. I then turn to a tricky second question: what purpose is served by re-telling these histories for political practice today? I argue that unlike a *deliberative* politics of memory, which aims to improve the quality of deliberative outcomes, an *aesthetic* politics of memory aims at a form of sense-scrambling, which potentially makes such political acts both more likely to be seen as such, and further, to be taken up in the first place. This also helps solve a puzzle in relation to Rancière's own work, namely what purpose his extensive historical studies serve when he explicitly denies the past has any pedagogical role to play for the present in the form of 'lessons delivered' (Ross, 2002: 128). Finally, I consider the compatibility of these two models of the politics of memory and argue that, despite the ever-present possibility that McCarthy's consciousness-raising of the history of social location might 'explain away' acts of politics, a potential if precarious alliance between the two practices is thinkable. This is one way, then, that we might begin to draw connections between deliberation and disagreement, without forcing a reconciliation.

In chapter two, I turn to a second emancipatory practice: struggles for recognition. I argue that Rancière's work on politics and disagreement presents a compelling alternative conceptualisation of what we can meaningfully call a recognition struggle that avoids the problematic reconciliatory tendencies of the Frankfurt School's key recognition theorist, Axel Honneth. I argue this helps us to better theorise what is at stake in certain recognition struggles carried out by indigenous people in settler societies and theorised by Audra Simpson (2014) as a 'politics of refusal.' But to understand disagreement as a form of recognition at all, I argue it must be understood to contain both an important moment of disruption and an often under-emphasised moment of reconfiguration. I

explore this reconfiguration in relation to egalitarian inscriptions, understood in the context of a 'porous' account of police and politics, to show how 'equality' can be inscribed from one sphere to the other. This also helps address a lingering problem from chapter one, namely how to understand the value of fleeting, un-heroic moments of emancipation which often seem to end in failure and do not lead to an 'emancipated end state'? Conceptualising disagreement as a form of 'recognition,' with a stronger emphasis on reconfiguration, allows us to see the longer-term value of Rancièrian politics without losing its status as an action located in the present instead of a future goal.

However, in order to make sense of Simpson's account of indigenous struggles as struggles for 'recognition' in Rancière's sense, I make a more substantial modification to one of the three criterion required for a political appearance: the need to fully dis-identify from one's social role. I argue that although a degree of dis-identification is required to separate actors from the way their social identity is typically understood, this need not imply they act in the 'name of anyone.' That is to say, it may well still matter which social identity they are partially dis-identifying from. This, I suggest, allows both a broader understanding of who can constitute the 'part without a part' and allows us to begin to respond to McNay's charge of social weightlessness.

In chapter three, I examine what I call 'emancipatory educational practices'. Specifically, I investigate whether Rancière is correct to claim that critical pedagogies and critical social theory, which are normally taken to be committed to equality and emancipation, in fact contain significant but largely unrecognised inegalitarian and anti-emancipatory tendencies. To approach this question, I begin by defending an account of equality as

equal intelligence.[57] This also helps clarify the key concept of equality which has remained elusive in the previous chapters. I then use this definition of equal intelligence to give a partial defence of Rancière's critique of the 'stultifying' force of explanation. I argue we can make sense of the claim that explanation can negatively impact our will to use our equal intelligence and at worst, that certain explanatory practices can actively undermine our willingness to take up emancipatory acts understood in the aesthetic sense.

In the rest of the chapter, I draw two consequences from the discussion. Firstly, and positively, I argue that the critique of explanation points the way towards alternative practices which do not use explanation. Specifically, I argue that practices of 'perceptual alienation' – which I understand in relation to the account of sense-scrambling developed in chapter one – supplement critical pedagogy through a comparison with the work of Paulo Freire. Secondly, and negatively, I argue Rancière's work allows us to critique pedagogies and social theories which rely on a particular form of explanation as 'stultifying'. However, to make this case, I argue we need a more nuanced account of explanation, which allows us to separate its stultifying from its non-stultifying forms. I show how the recent ideology critique of Frankfurt School theorist Rahel Jaeggi and the critical social theorist Robin Celikates point towards ways to avoid the charge of stultification. Indeed, by endorsing a modest, nuanced account of explanation, I suggest we can continue investigating the overlaps between Frankfurt School and Rancièrian critical theories without the former coming to undermine the latter's 'method of equality' as his more polemical critiques suggest.

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[57] This also helps to clarify what acting in the 'capacity of anyone' means, as well as how we can separate acting in the 'capacity of anyone' – which I defend – from acting in the 'name of anyone' – which I rejected in the previous chapter.

In the conclusion, I turn to two final unresolved but crucial issues with my account. The first is to reconsider to what extent Rancière is really a helpful thinker of decolonisation. Despite the application of Rancière's thought to numerous anti-colonial struggles, which I discussed above, several theorists have expressed lingering doubts over the usefulness of his account. Specifically, they raise problems for who can constitute the 'part without a part' which is to say, who can count as a political actor for Rancière. For Dmitri Nikulin, for example, his description of the 'part without a part' as the 'poor' is telling of the limited application of this category, since 'the poor:'

> does not extend to those whose systematic exclusion … cannot, and should not, be thought in purely economic terms – for example, women. Progressive as it is, 'poor' is still exclusive of others … his own approach is selective and exclusive… (2012: 77)[58]

In some ways it is easy to refute Nikulin's claim. Rancière's use of language, expressed as disagreement, cannot be taken as corresponding literally to categories existing within the existing distribution[59] and as I discuss further in chapter one, the political subject is precisely the one who breaks from existing categories. Indeed, in his *Ten Theses*, Rancière writes explicitly that 'the "poor", precisely, does not designate an economically disadvantaged part of the population, but simply the people who do not count…' (DIS: 32) Or rather, as Chambers argues, what is meant by 'the poor' depends on whether the subject is acting politically or not: '[s]ometimes the poor is the *part des sans-part,* while

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[58] Note that he is talking specifically about the practice of writing the history of the part without a part. For more on this, see chapter one.
[59] For this reason, my readings of Rancière's concepts invariably begin with a careful re-definition of what he understands by the terminology he is using. The failure to carefully consider his terminology lies, I suggest, behind many of the misunderstandings and critiques of his work.

sometimes the poor is an economic category of policing' (Chambers, 2013: 165). Indeed, it certainly seems clear from Rancière's own examples – where he applies his model to women, the *sans papier* and so on – that for him, anyone can act in the name of the 'poor' or the 'part without a part' regardless of their social identity, since it is precisely from this identity that they must dis-identify.

Yet at the same time, Rancière has accepted that the model of worker emancipation has played a privileged role in his work. He describes the 'worker's movement'[60] as the 'political subject *par excellence'* (WIS: 213). Jean-Philippe Deranty has also noted that '[i]f there is a process of formalisation at play in Rancière … it is a process of generalisation from proletarian examples to all egalitarian politics' (Deranty in RoD: 74).[61] But it is not at all clear that we can build a more general account of political emancipation based on a limited number of examples of *worker* emancipation. Might this restrict the openness of his model to identifying political subjectivities whose emancipatory action takes a different form to the individuals he studied? Might it represent a lingering Marxist bias in Rancière's work, despite his intense disagreement with certain forms of Marxism? Indeed, whilst Rancière does discuss a few examples of female emancipation – particularly the examples of Olympe de Gouges and Jeanne Deroin, as well as a number of the characters in *Proletarian Nights* – it is notable that few feminist writers have appropriated Rancière's work.[62]

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[60] Note, by 'worker movement' Rancière refers to a different phenomenon to the standard socialist and Marxist accounts. See chapter one, part three for discussion of *Proletarian Nights*.

[61] The conditional leaves open the possibility that we should not see this 'formalisation' operative in his work and whether it this remains, for Deranty, an open question.

[62] This means that although this analysis is specifically concerned with investigating whether the subaltern can constitue the 'part without a part,' it is also relevant to investigating Rancière's contribution to other struggles outside of the worker paradigm, such as the feminist movement.

Tina Chanter's recent book *Art, Politics and Rancière* represents an exception to this trend. However, despite her sympathetic use of Rancière, she identifies a lack of interest in questions of women and slavery in his work, as well as the complicated ways in which their oppression overlaps, resulting in the invisibility of female slaves (Chanter, 2018: 21).[63] This lack of interest, Chanter hypothesises, probably arises from:

> the distribution of the sensible that helped to form his political and philosophical vision, which bodies were permitted to occupy which spaces, whose *logos* established itself as the authoritative milieu, how a certain aesthetic allowed particular intellectual and political questions to attain pertinence and legitimacy while precluding others, what was seeable, sayable and doable, and what was not – all this surely played a role in shaping Rancière's enquiries. In question is whether as a consequence, a particular wrong becomes salient in his account, a certain miscount comes to predominate, while other wrongs and miscounts go unacknowledged, remaining invisible or nonsensical. If so, what would it do to Rancière's thinking to mobilise these sites of invisibility? (Ibid., 20)

For Chanter, then, the response is to take up his useful insights into aesthetic emancipation – how dissensus can change the distribution of the sensible – but in a way which is responsive to the concerns of intersectionality (ibid., 161). Rather than dismissing his project, she seeks to complicate and adapt the story. My modification of Rancière's political appearance in chapter two follows Chanter's lead in this respect and I return to the question of his usefulness for theorists interested in decolonisation in the conclusion.

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[63] See more on Chanter's critique of Rancière in chapter two, part four and the conclusion.

The second unresolved question I address in the conclusion is the extent to which Rancière should be understood as a critical theorist. This is another key claim of my thesis but it is far from uncontroversial. Indeed, as I explore in chapter three, Rancière dismisses the 'tradition of critique' due to what he perceives as its inegalitarian pretensions to 'demystify' the ignorant. He writes, for example:

> In effect, the procedures of social critique have as their goal treating the incapable: those who do not know how to see, who do not understand the meaning of what they see, who do not know how to transform acquired knowledge into activist activity. And doctors need these patients to look after. (ES: 47)

For Rancière, the problem with explanations of domination is that they can have 'stultifying' effects which, I argue in chapter three, may – but need not necessarily – work actively against the take-up of aesthetic emancipatory acts. This seems to suggest a critical theory of society on a Rancièrian model is potentially a self-defeating contradiction: explaining structures of domination in order to promote emancipation when, in fact, the take-up of such emancipatory practices is undermined by the explanatory form of the account. Instead, Rancière argues that explanation of inegalitarian structures of domination is not necessary for emancipation. As such, he suggests his approach constitutes a 'radical break' with Frankfurt School theorists and others to whom he attributes the view that 'first you have to study the specific historical form of inequality, and so understand the logic of the system, before you can develop strategies that are a match for it' (ME: 112). But if we reject the aim of explaining

domination entirely, then we must wonder what a critical theory – and in particular a critical theory of *society* – would do.

Against Rancière's own reservations with being aligned with social science, however, I suggest there are at least two good reasons to take the idea of a Rancièrian critical theory seriously. Firstly, we have to ask what Rancière himself is up to. What is the purpose of his own texts, which 'add the theorist's voice' to those of political actors not simply descriptively but in a form of allegiance with the struggle? Secondly, in a recent essay, he explicitly rejected what he called the 'critique of critique'.[64] Critique, on Rancière's definition, demonstrates a hidden reality to us, thereby giving rise to guilt which should cause us to act. He gives the example of Martha Rosler's 'Bringing the War Home' from the 1970s, where images from the Vietnam War are transposed into an idyllic domestic US scene. The work aims to 'enlighten' the viewer as to the complicity of their own comfort in imperialism and suffering (ibid., 27). By contrast, a recent image created by Josephine Meckseper from 2006 shows a group of demonstrators carrying placards in the background and an overflowing rubbish bin in the foreground. This is interpreted by Rancière as a critique of the function of 'critique.' The political radicalism to which Rosler's image sought to give rise is itself revealed as:

> a phenomenon of youth fashion… these demonstrators are there because they have consumed images of the collapse of the towers and the bombing in Iraq. And it is yet another spectacle that they are offering us in the streets. In the last instance, terrorism and consumption, protest and spectacle, are reduced to one

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[64] Note that I am not defending the plausibility of Rancière's work on the 'critique of critique' but rather demonstrating the implications of his rejection in relation to his own critical work.

and the same process governed by the commodity law of equivalence. (Ibid., 28-29)

Nevertheless, this 'critique of critique' is still aimed at the same 'revelation' as the critique seen in Rosler's image.

> They [the images] still tell us: here is the reality you do not know how to see – the boundless reign of commodity exhibition and the nihilist horror of today's petty-bourgeois lifestyle. But also: here is the reality you do not want to see – the participation of your supposed gestures of revolt in this process of exhibiting signs of distinction governed by commodity exhibition… it is always a question of showing the spectator what she does not know how to see, and making her feel ashamed of what she does not want to see… (ES: 28-29)

That is to say, for Rancière, the 'critique of critique' utilises the same logic of revealing what one cannot or does not want to see in order to give rise to guilt. Yet whilst previously critique attempted to direct energy towards political action (albeit, from a Rancièrian perspective, misguidedly), now it is 'entirely disconnected from this horizon or emancipation or clearly directed against this dream' (ibid., 32). For Rancière, this gives rise to a left-wing melancholia which 'invites us to recognise that there is no alternative to the power of the beast and to admit that we are satisfied by it' (ibid., 40). In rejecting the 'critique of critique', then, Rancière suggests that certain other forms of critique are still possible which can have emancipatory consequences.

I will argue that we can make sense of Rancièrian critical theory in two senses. Firstly, my modification of 'explanation' in chapter three allows me to draw closer links between

Rancière and the Frankfurt School Critical Theory tradition by examining 'explanatory' accounts which avoid the stultifying consequences identified by Rancière. This allows for a modest, nuanced but still in some senses 'explanatory' form of a critical theory of society which, I suggest, is compatible with Rancière's method of equality. But secondly, and I suggest more interestingly, I explore what an affirmative critique might look like which is *itself* concerned with unsettling the distribution of the sensible. Specifically, I examine Rancière's use and development of the concepts of politics and police and the effects these concepts might produce. In this way, I suggest, Rancière points towards a form of critical theory which itself can potentially produce aesthetic emancipatory effects.

Chapter One: Politics, memory, empire

On June 16th 2016, in the last few days of the Brexit Referendum, the UKIP leader and Leave campaigner Nigel Farage unveiled what has since become an infamous poster. Entitled 'Breaking Point,' the poster consisted of a photograph of migrants crossing the Croatia-Slovenia border in 2015. They are packed tightly together, walking in the direction of the viewer, coming ever closer. We cannot see the end of the queue, which curves out of sight. The implication is that many more are coming. According to the caption, 'The EU has failed us all.' The message is clear: 'Europe' cannot be trusted to protect British citizens from the threats to our common borders, which can only be secured by 'taking back control' of national borders.

'Take back control of our country' was indeed a constant refrain heard during the Leave campaign. But, as Gurminder Bhambra (2018) argues, how the demand is read – including the key term 'our country' – is based on a particular, and inaccurate, understanding of history. This is because Britain had never been a mere 'country.' Even when it was formed in the early eighteenth century, England and Scotland already possessed colonies. This meant the new Great Britain was already an empire. Likewise, when Britain entered the EEC in 1973, decolonisation was not fully complete and Empire had not come to an end.[1] Which country is it then to which the poster designers wish us to return? And who constitutes the 'our' to which it is seen to belong? For it is far from historically self-evident what British citizenship consists in. British citizenship

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[1] Indeed, I suggest we should question the assumption that the Empire has really come to an end, even today. Besides the continued existence of fourteen former colonies, now called British Overseas Territories, one could argue colonialism has simply been superseded by the less obvious physical force of neo-imperialism, and/or that the legacy of Empire has only ever been superficially worked through. It is this final point which I address in this chapter.

was granted, in 1948, to citizens of the Empire: a total of 800 million people. Of course, until then, the direction of migration had been away from the metropole, not into it. It was only with the Windrush generation, as citizens of the British empire[2] arrived from the 'peripheries' into the 'centre', that moral panic began to spread until, by the late 1960s, most of the rights of the citizens of the colonies and the Commonwealth to come to Britain had been removed.

Our reading of the accompanying picture is similarly linked into a particular history. To read the image of the migrants not as tragic, or as a situation which requires our urgent action, but rather as *threatening* is to read it in light of a long history of anti-immigration metaphors: as the visual depiction of the familiar tropes of (animalised) swarms, (violent) hordes, and inundations, in the face of which life cannot go on as before. One faces the risk of violence and the very real possibility of being literally or metaphorically swept away. By making use of such tropes, the poster connects up with familiar right-wing metaphors and arguments from the twentieth century. As one journalist put it, the poster is 'the visual equivalent of Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech.'[3] But we should also note the racialised character of this visual metaphor. Commentators were quick to point out that the faces depicted are all non-white and that the only prominent white face in the picture has been concealed by a text box.[4] But in fact, Bhambra argues, the fear of immigration has long been racialised. The threat to which Enoch Powell and others pointed, was hugely inflated. At that time, the arrival of citizens from what she calls the

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[2] We are incorrect, then, in identifying the Windrush generation as immigrants. This further underscores how unfairly the Windrush generation – who precisely came as citizens – have been treated in being 'deported' as illegal immigrants.

[3] Indeed, as was quickly pointed out on social media, the poster is almost identical to a piece of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda, shown in a BBC documentary in 2005. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/16/farage-poster-enoch-powell-rivers-of-blood-racism-ukip-european-union. Accessed: 18 July 2018.

[4] See: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/nigel-farage-defends-ukip-breaking-point-poster-queue-of-migrants. Accessed: 18 July 2018.

'darker' Commonwealth countries represented only about one tenth of the arrivals – with huge numbers of Europeans also brought in to rebuild a country devastated by the war. However, they were not subject to the same restrictions.[5]

How we read and react to this poster then, as well as the way it was conceived and designed, depends at least partly on a particular public memory (or public forgetting) and this includes a particular public memory of the British Empire. Conversely, the poster further reinforces such understandings of history. I am making the fairly intuitive claim that politics and history are profoundly mutually interconnected. What is remembered and how it is remembered, as well as what is forgotten, have important consequences for political practices in the present. At the same time, political practices feed back into the constitution of public memory: further reinforcing or undermining certain readings of history and suppressing others. These processes both form part of what can be broadly understood as a politics of memory.

That many people of all political stripes recognise the importance of public memory, particularly I am suggesting in relation to politics, can be seen in the controversy surrounding the national curriculum in history. The 'great history debate' has even been described by education scholars as 'nothing less than a public and vibrant debate over the

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[5] Indeed, as a broader point, it is impossible today to understand the history of racism without a consideration of the colonial context in which racial hierarchies came into being. There was no racism in the modern sense before the conquest of the Americas: not only did racism develop within a context marked by imperialism, but it developed through and in the service of colonialism. This is not to claim that what Balibar calls 'neo-racism' is identical to older forms of colonial racism (Balibar, 1991: 17-28). Nor is it to argue that racism can solely be understood as the outcome of colonialism. Anti-semitism, for instance, seems to be a form of racism which can be understood relatively separately from colonialism, although there are still complex connections between the two. For instance, Cesaire argued that the anti-semitic practices undertaken by the National Socialists were imported from the colonies. As he argues, the Nazis 'applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the "coolies" of India, and the "niggers" of Africa' (Cesaire, 2000: 36).

national soul' (cited in Gebrial, 2018: 24).[6] It can also be seen in both the struggle of and resistance to movements such as Rhodes Must Fall, considered further in the introduction and chapter three.

I suggest that 'Breaking Point' demonstrates the importance of addressing the way the politics of memory is conducted in the British context. Although just one particularly, though unfortunately far from exceptionally, unpalatable moment in the recent history of the politics of immigration, we have here an example of the way in which public memory of Britain's colonial past feeds into and continues to impact upon present day political practices, discourses and debates, as well as processes of identity formation. It suggests the continued importance of the empire on notions of British identity, on international relations, on public discourse, and on the policies which governments defend and implement.[7] In a context of the growing prevalence of alt-right views, an increase in hate crime as well as the ongoing suffering endured on migration routes – epitomised by the high death toll in the Mediterranean[8] – this is no small matter.

Indeed, this task is even more urgent, I suggest, given that the legacy of Empire is poorly understood, repressed, dismissed as no longer relevant, or seen through a lens of nostalgia and pride. Shockingly, a Yougov poll of 2014 found that, by three to one, British people feel the empire is something to be proud rather than ashamed of; and a

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[6] I discuss emancipatory educational practices in more detail in chapter three.

[7] Indeed, for Bhambra, Brexit should be understood as a belated moment for coming to terms with Britain's new small nation status: evidence of 'the belated death-throes of empire as Britain reckons with what it means to become a small country' (Bhambra, 2018).

[8] According to the Missing Migrant Project, the number of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean was 2,015 in 2015, 2,997 in 2016, 2,381 in 2018 and, as of 22nd November, 2,075 in 2018. https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean. Accessed: 25 November 2018.

third of British people say they would like Britain to still have an empire today.[9] Even the extent to which we think of the 'legacy' of empire as something over and done with, denies forms of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism which exist today.[10]

This chapter considers which form a reconceived politics of memory could take in order to have emancipatory consequences. Which political and historical practices could feed into a politics of memory such that 'Breaking Point' is read otherwise or considered inappropriate, unfit for production or simply *does not make sense* in the first place? How should we imagine a politics of memory which has the potential of creating emancipatory effects?

To investigate this question, I turn in the first section to the deliberative theorist Thomas McCarthy whose recent work, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* explicitly discusses the politics of memory.[11] Building on Habermas' work on processes of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in Germany, he examines how the public memory of legacies of slavery affects deliberative forms of politics as they are conducted in the US today. He suggests that certain forms of 'historical consciousness-raising' could improve the quality of deliberative outcomes by linking present racial disparities to the legacy of slavery.[12] Despite noting a few reservations concerning the shift from the German to the

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[9] https://yougov.co.uk/news/2014/07/26/britain-proud-its-empire/. Accessed 18 July 2018.

[10] We can see here parallels with Coulthard's discussion of liberal recognition in chapter two, part two, which suggests the politics of recognition itself is the primary tool through which colonialism works today. This is because in presenting recognition as a matter of overcoming past injustices through reparations and apologies, the workings of colonialism in the present are obscured (Coulthard, 2014: 25).

[11] As I suggested in the introduction, this is a welcome attempt by a key thinker associated with the Frankfurt School – particularly in its Habermasian form – to think through issues often ignored by the school.

[12] To be clear, this is only one possible method McCarthy offers for improving the quality of democratic decisions, albeit one which he clearly considers significant, particularly when dealing with the legacies of large-scale violent, traumatic events.

American context, I largely endorse McCarthy's project as a project for improving deliberative processes of democracy, and suggest briefly how it could usefully be developed as a strategy for reassessing the memory of empire in the British context.

Nevertheless, I will suggest that there are limitations to McCarthy's politics of memory which result from a restricted understanding of both politics and history. In particular, I examine the effect of adopting a Habermasian deliberative model of politics on the specifically aesthetic form of politics analysed by Jacques Rancière and discussed in the introduction. Despite the explicit commitment of deliberative theorists to opening up dialogue to as many participants as possible, in order to improve the outcomes of deliberative processes,[13] I will suggest there is a form of specifically *political* discourse which is at best side-lined and at worst ignored on McCarthy's picture. This is the political discourse of the 'part without a part.' To make this argument, I turn in the second section to Rancière's critique of Habermas. Despite many potential overlaps between Rancière and Habermas – who seem to share a commitment to recognising the equal capacity of individuals[14] – the third chapter of *Disagreement* is best read as a

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[13] Deliberative theorists are generally committed to improving the quality of democratic decision-making processes by making the debate open and responsive to different voices: focusing not merely on counting people's pre-formed ideas but changing those ideas in light of the opinions of others: particularly less powerful others. For example, McCarthy – in considering questions of empire, race and development – takes seriously problems of Eurocentrism, particularly on notions of progress and development, and argues that the antidote is 'further opening the discourse of modernity to non-Western voices' (McCarthy, 2009: 226).

[14] Against the more pessimistic accounts of the First Generation Frankfurt School and many of their French contemporaries, both Habermas and Rancière work from an assumption regarding the capacity of speaking beings to effect political change in the world. Rancière, as I discuss in part two and chapter three below, works from the presupposition that everyone has 'equal intelligence', whilst for Habermas, we must presuppose 'those acting communicatively are *capable of mutual criticism'* (2004: 119). Indeed, for Habermas, as I explain below, by entering into argument each speaker tacitly endorses the presupposition that 'every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse' (1995: 89).

sustained critique of Habermas' notion of understanding (D: 43-60).[15] Yet as I indicated

in the introduction, this critique is generally poorly understood and has been widely

ignored in the literature on both sides. Building on the work of Russell and Montin

(2015), who represent a welcome exception to this trend, I argue that Rancière shows

how the deliberative model marginalises and trivialises the political discourse of the part

without a part.

In the second half of the chapter, I turn to the consequences of this omission for the

politics of memory. I ask firstly what a *history* might look like which focuses on this

specifically aesthetic dimension: these out of places actors and their out of place speech?

I then ask which consequences this re-focused history might have on *political* action in

the present. This second question is also motivated by a puzzle in relation to Rancière's

own practice. He has claimed that history has no lessons for the present (Ross, 2002:

128) and is opposed to the claim that we need to be educated by others in order to

emancipate ourselves.[16] At the same time, he has engaged in extensive archival research

of marginal historical figures (see for example PN, IS) which can itself be seen as an –

albeit unusual – form of historical consciousness-raising. I argue that by drawing

attention to these out-of-place emancipatory acts, a distinctly Rancièrian politics of

memory[17] may promote acts of aesthetic emancipation in the present by increasing our

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[15] Indeed, the centrality of Habermas and Habermasian 'understanding' as a target in
Rancière's work can perhaps be seen in the original title – and key concept – of
Disagreement, *'mésentente'*, which can also be translated as 'misunderstanding.'
[16] This is due to his commitment to 'equal intelligence.' See chapter three for further
discussion and a partial defense of this claim.
[17] Strictly speaking, a Rancièrian 'politics of memory' might make little sense. Recall from
the introduction that politics, for Rancière, requires the appearance of a political subject.
In what sense, then, can 'memory' be political? There are at least two possible ways to
answer this question. On the one hand, we might be able to think about a politics of
memory in Rancière's own terms insofar as we are concerned with the (re-)appearance of
historical political actors. On the other, as I argue in the conclusion, I am far less

ability to see possibility. This may have effects both on observers coming to 'see' such acts as political, as well as on potential actors in encouraging them to take up political acts in the first place.

In the final section I examine the relationship between these two forms of the politics of memory and ask whether a Rancièrian politics of memory could unproblematically supplement a deliberative picture like McCarthy's. From Rancière's perspective, there would be at least two worries in combining them. Firstly, a more traditional form of consciousness-raising seems incompatible with Rancière's strong commitment to equality which, he argues, rules out 'explaining' to others who do not yet know. For Rancière, such processes of explanation cannot lead to specifically aesthetic emancipatory consequences and can even work actively against the take-up of aesthetic emancipatory acts. Since I discuss this question in detail in chapter three, where I will argue that the commitment to equality need not rule out all forms of explanation, I defer detailed discussion of this issue for now.[18] Instead I focus on the second worry: namely the potential conflict between McCarthy's emphasis on acquiring a better understanding of social location and Rancière's demand that the political subject dis-identifies from her social role. Could a deliberative politics of memory work to undermine the 'moving-out-of-place' of emancipatory actors? I argue that this need not be the case and that a precarious alliance between the two politics of memory is thinkable. This is then also one way we might see potential overlaps between disagreement and deliberation.

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concerned with defining what counts as political than Rancière. We might then accept a politics of memory is not political for Rancière, but could be political for us.
[18] See chapter three, particularly part four.

Part One: McCarthy's politics of memory

McCarthy discussion of the politics of memory is motivated by the problem of racial disparity in the United States. He considers democratic politics to be the tool through which to address such an injustice. Yet he also recognises that addressing the extensive problems of racial injustice through mechanisms of democracy is potentially problematic. If democracy is understood simply as the aggregation of preferences, and if it is not in the interest of dominant majority groups to implement or endorse ameliorative policies for minority groups, then democracy seems likely to perpetuate or even exacerbate the unjust conditions in which the latter live. Of course, most democratic theories are not so crude as to suggest that people simply arrive at the polling station with preformed, irreversible intentions based only on naked self-interest. Most are also interested in the ways in which people's views can be influenced or changed. Deliberative theorists, as the name suggests, focus on processes of deliberation through which better decisions can be made not only by adding the views of currently excluded others, but also by changing views through rational dialogue.[19] To this end, McCarthy asks how a reconceived politics of memory could improve the deliberative process in the US (2009: 96-127).

As a model, McCarthy examines the German process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or coming to terms with the country's Nazi past. He discusses one important event in this process: the so-called *Historikerstreit*. This was triggered by the re-assessment of the Nazi past by a number of German revisionist historians in the early 1980s, which famously included the relativisation of the Holocaust. This historiographical shift accompanied a shift to the right in German politics and the public mood. For many, Germans had been

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[19] It is for this reason that Habermas' communicative action has been so influential amongst deliberative theorists, not least because he retrieves a form of rationality inherent within speech. See part two below.

living in Hitler's shadow for too long. They believed it was time to move beyond the impossible burden of German guilt and take pride in German history again (Evans, 1989: 15). But for Habermas and other opponents of the revisionists, no length of time could relieve German guilt. Against the revisionists, Habermas argued publicly that German culture, traditions and history still implicated modern citizens in a way of life that had made the Holocaust possible (see in particular Habermas, 1989: 209-267).

According to McCarthy, the *Historikerstreit* is important because it saw the entry of *historical scholarship* into the *public sphere*. Both of these elements are significant. On the one hand, for Habermas and McCarthy – as for all deliberative theorists – it is vital that the debate took place in the public sphere. It is in the public sphere that the ideas arising out of historical scholarship could be taken up, discussed and processed by the citizens at large. If the debate had remained within its own specialist field, as most historical debates do, the vast majority would never have engaged in it. It is in the public sphere that the debate became a *politics* of memory.

On the other, it is significant that it was *historical scholarship* which entered the public realm, for at least two reasons. Firstly, for McCarthy, historical *scholarship* does not enter the public realm as one opinion among many others, but instead introduces a measure of 'objectivity' into disputes which may otherwise be decided purely by power relations (McCarthy, 2009: 104-105). On this picture, objective scholarship can help overcome misguided, sloppy or false claims, which can be particularly important when issued by influential actors. This is significant since dominant groups very often do not have an obvious interest in recognising their implication in violent, unjust pasts. Of course, this meets the immediate objection that in postmodernity we can no longer appeal to objectivity in history. But for McCarthy, we do not need a 'foundationalist' account of

history. It suffices to speak of a deconstructive objectivity that accepts that historical narratives are never simply dictated by 'facts' but also by the standpoint of the historian. Nevertheless it still assumes there is a spectrum between facts and interpretations. At the factual end of the spectrum, constraints are imposed upon possible interpretations both by the available evidence and the community of scholars. This eliminates some interpretations – such as the 'Auschwitz lie' – and reduces the plausibility of others.

Secondly, it is significant that the scholarship entering the public realm was *historical*. Following Habermas, McCarthy claimed that public memory has a profound impact on who *collectively* the citizens of a particular state understand themselves to be. He claims that:

> any major shifts in German public memory *would* leave their mark upon German self-understanding, with practical-political consequences. If those shifts were in the direction of denying and repressing the past instead of confronting and dealing with it, they would likely lead to forms of "acting out" rather than "working through." (McCarthy, 2009: 102, *emphasis added*)

On this picture, contemporary self-understanding is dependent on – although of course not exclusively determined by – the public memory of history.[20] This means that *who we are* is inevitably affected by *who we think we were*. As Habermas argues, recognising that past evil issued 'from the midst of our collective life' – rather than being accidental or marginal to it – '*cannot but* have a powerful impact on our self-understanding… and shake any naïve trust in our own traditions' (cited in McCarthy, 2009: 103, *emphasis added*). It is

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[20] More specifically, the claim is that contemporary German self-identity is dependent on who the Germans think they were. This would, of course, take a different form in other cases, given the role a particularly violent history plays in the picture.

the scale of these horrors – a 'past evil' – and the latter's emergence from traditions that exist to this day, which Habermas argues would necessarily influence German self-understanding. This is presumably because recognition of these facts compels citizens to take up a critical, reflective attitude with respect to their inherited traditions. For this reason at least, he argues, Germans have a duty 'to keep alive, without distortion and not only in an intellectual form, the memory of the sufferings of those who were murdered by German hands' (Habermas, 1989: 233). And the stakes are high. If the politics of memory fails – if, for instance, the revisionists had not been challenged in the public realm during the *Historikerstreit* – we are likely to see a resurgence of the very attitudes that are being repressed. Indeed, McCarthy argues, such 'acting out' can be seen in Austria and former East Germany: countries which did not undergo a sustained process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and where right wing politicians and neo-Nazi groups enjoy relatively high levels of public support.[21]

Habermas argue, then, that public memory – at the very least in the German context – has profound implications for present-day politics. As one takes up a critical relation to

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[21] By contrast, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is seen by McCarthy to have been relatively successful in the former West Germany although this is certainly debatable. In particular, the rise of the far right *Alternativ für Deutschland* (*AfD*) challenges us to reconsider how successful *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has been. Whilst it enjoys its strongest (electoral) support in former East Germany (see for example https://www.ft.com/content/e7c7d918-a17e-11e7-b797-b61809486fe2 accessed: 20 March 2018), the AfD is certainly not absent from West German political culture. In the 2016 regional elections, for example, AfD's vote share in the two western states Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Palatinate was 15.1% and 12.6% respectively, figures higher than several of the Eastern states (see: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/afd-germany-alternative-fur-deutschland-elections-map-statista-party-a7226956.html accessed: 20 March 2018). At the same time, one might question whether the reason for the higher levels of right wing extremism in Austria and the former GDR can be attributed (only) to the absence of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. What conclusion one should draw from these examples is therefore unclear. It could both be argued that *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has been far less successful than McCarthy claims or, on the contrary, that *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has been a successful but partial project which should be understood as a never-finished process in pressing need of further renewal.

traditions and practices, the way in which patterns of contemporary injustice, supported by these same practices, may come to be seen in a different light (McCarthy, 2012: 105). This means the politics of memory has the potential to improve the situation for groups suffering injustice today, like the Turkish *Gastarbeiter* and their descendants, even if they were not directly targeted by the horrors of the past. But equally, the politics of memory has profound implications for the descendants of the victims of the Nazi past. For Habermas, the 'Benjaminian legacy' must be discharged for if not, 'our fellow Jewish citizens and the sons, daughters and grandchildren of all those who were murdered would feel themselves unable to breathe in our country' (Habermas, 1989: 233).

Yet Germany is not the only country with a violent history during which crimes against humanity were committed. In his chapter, McCarthy attempts to draw parallels with American history and the legacy of slavery. Whilst McCarthy suggests historical scholarship in the US is finally addressing this legacy seriously, it has not yet impacted on the public sphere in the same way as the *Historikerstreit* in Germany. As in the German case, the horrors of slavery are profound in scale. It might seem to be harder to make the argument that slavery came out of traditions which are still central to American life today. One common view is that slavery was an aberration in the context of Enlightenment reason: that the two were in contradiction and modern American values eventually 'won out' over antiquated views which justified slavery. This has, of course, been disputed by many scholars who argue that – far from a contradiction – slavery was central to the development of modern ideals of freedom and equality.[22] In that case, modern American – and, more widely, European – forms of life are still intrinsically implicated in forms of life which gave rise to slavery.

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[22] For instance, as part of his argument that the 'social contract' should be understood as a 'racial contract', Charles Mills argues that the personhood of whites (or white males) was 'enshrined simultaneously' with non-white subpersonhood (Mills, 1997: 56).

McCarthy makes, however, a slightly different argument. Rather than examining traditions directly, he is interested in the way the entry of 'objective history' into the public realm could 'effectively recontextualis[e] the racial issues of today as the latest chapter in the continuing story of slavery and its aftermath' (2009: 120). Specifically, he suggests US citizens need to understand the history of slavery (hidden[23]) behind present-day patterns of social inequality. For example, black ghettos in American cities can be shown to have arisen within the historical and social context of slavery and the policies of the Jim Crow era. Once we understand that these ghettos, in turn, give rise to a deep cultural and psychological alienation from mainstream culture, we can reach the conclusion that blaming inhabitants of the ghettos for certain empirically observable traits they have acquired as residents of the ghetto is 'getting the causal story backwards' (ibid., 125). The claim, then, is that a better historical consciousness of the way in which American forms of life, which include unjust patterns of social organisation, are entangled with past horrors of slavery, could not fail to have an impact on the forms of politics Americans are willing to endorse.

The move from the German to the American context also results in a second subtle change of emphasis. Whilst Habermas focuses primarily on '*our*' traditions, McCarthy emphasises the way in which, by understanding social structures and organisational patterns, we come to better understand *other* oppressed groups. For example, at least in this chapter, McCarthy focuses on methods for 'correcting' the way in which members of oppressed groups are viewed. He cites several examples of the misperceptions which

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[23] Although I will not make this argument here, the aim is clearly to 'demystify' others regarding 'hidden' oppression they 'cannot see.' For this reason, it may be possible to criticize McCarthy's historical consciousness-raising, from a Rancièrian perspective, with respect to its 'presumption of inequality.' See chapter three.

form part of the 'black image' in the average white American mind. One study, for instance, has shown the belief that blacks suffer disproportionately from a range of character defects is fairly widespread among whites (ibid., 119). Another study demonstrated that as many as 58% of white Americans mistakenly think the average African American is as well off or better off than white Americans in their income or housing conditions (ibid., 120). In this context, McCarthy argues, white citizens are not only unlikely to support policies which contradict strongly held misperceptions, the implementation of such policies is also likely to increase racial resentment. But bringing white Americans to see the legacy of slavery within current unjust patterns – and indeed, to see these unjust patterns for what they are – would, for McCarthy 'likely make a difference in the judgements of many citizens as to whether proposed measures are "deserved compensation" for discrimination or "unfair advantages"' (ibid., 126). One senses, then, that McCarthy is primarily talking to white American as the dominant group without whose support ameliorative policies will not get off the ground. Indeed, this might also be inevitable given the deliberative form of politics with which he is working, for which gaining the support of the majority is a requirement.

Yet we might worry that a form of consciousness-raising which focuses on the image of the other may not have the radical consequences which McCarthy hopes. For example, whilst James Baldwin has convincingly argued that whites do, indeed, have an important role to play in combatting racism, the duty he envisages for white Americans is not to understand their co-citizens more accurately. Rather, their task is to learn to love and accept themselves in the light of past and present oppression, exploitation, violence and cruelty in which they are deeply implicated. It is only when, and if, whites can learn to love themselves despite their history that 'the Negro problem will no longer exist, for it

will no longer be needed' (Baldwin, 2017: 27).[24] Baldwin elaborates, in the letter to his nephew:

> There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that they must accept you. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that you must accept them. And I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men. Many of them, indeed, know better, but, as you will discover, people find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger. In this case, the danger, in the minds of most white Americans, is the loss of their identity. Try to imagine how you would feel if you woke up one morning to find the sun shining and all the stars aflame. You would be frightened because it is out of the order of nature. Any upheaval in the universe is terrifying because it so profoundly attacks one's sense of one's own reality. Well, the black man has functioned in the white man's world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and *as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations…* (Ibid., 17, *emphasis added*)

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[24] This might suggest that, for Baldwin, the concern is neither to correct the 'black image' or the 'white image' in the white mind. Rather, the ultimate aim is to question the division into black and white in the first place. As such, there might be interesting parallels with Rancièrian politics below. However, in neither case should this be taken to mean that we 'whitewash' history and adopt a neutral point of view which, of course, has always been the alibi for the white, male point of view. Undermining the division does not mean pretending it does not exist.

This suggests that McCarthy should perhaps be more ambitious with his historical consciousness-raising. For those whites who are still trapped in their own history, coming to understand it properly would have profound effects on their self-identity. These effects are compared to Galileo's decentring of the earth in the universe. Understanding black ghettos – and certain characteristics of their inhabitants – as the legacy of slavery might well prompt certain white citizens to look more favourably upon certain ameliorative policy measures, but I suggest it is unlikely to have the radical consequences of universe-decentring.[25] Indeed, the scale of the challenge, as Baldwin sees it, might lead us to doubt that a better public understanding 'would' – as Habermas perhaps optimistically argued – affect the self-understanding of the dominant group. Human beings regularly hold contradictory ideas at the same time and there is often strong resistance to rational argument as, for example, psychoanalysis shows us.

This means that we might detect a 'watering down' of the picture from Habermas to McCarthy insofar as a shift from 'our traditions' to 'current societal organisation' – and from understanding the self to the other – might be insufficient for a serious reckoning with our own self-understanding. As such, we might want to change the focus of McCarthy's picture, perhaps by drawing him back closer to Habermas, to have the consequences we are seeking. But such a move would presumably be compatible with McCarthy's picture. It certainly does not necessarily mean we should reject McCarthy's overall proposal of the role a politics of memory might play in improving deliberative processes. Indeed, it might simply alert us to the pressing need for well-informed public debate.

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[25] Note that the universe-decentring occurs 'as he [the black man *sic*] moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations' (Baldwin, 2017: 17, *emphasis added*). This formulation suggests there may well be interesting parallels with Rancière's aesthetic emancipation. See the conclusion where I return to this point.

If we can make a productive comparison between the German case and American history, could we potentially make a similar move in relation to the British memory of Empire? As I suggested above, a serious reckoning with the British imperial past has hardly begun. Indeed, even the most prominent historical scholarship entering the public realm – for example Niall Ferguson's (2003) relatively positive portrayal of *Empire* – seems in need of far greater contestation. McCarthy's work might provide some indications for how such a politics of memory might be conceived. For example, analogously to his example of the black ghettos, one might demonstrate the way unequal structures at home and abroad are the legacy of empire. A better understanding of the implication of current patterns of national and international inequality in violent histories might positively impact the type of ameliorative policies citizens are willing to endorse. Alternatively and more radically, as Habermas suggests, the very self-understanding of British citizens might be impacted by coming to see ourselves as inheritors of a tradition which was responsible for crimes committed on a vast scale.

So far, then, although I have questioned some of the details of McCarthy's model, I have largely endorsed the project as a whole. But in the rest of this chapter, I question the limitations for the *politics* of memory of understanding *politics* as deliberative democracy. As we have seen, the politics of memory, for McCarthy, is directly connected to achieving better deliberative outcomes. But the discussion has already pointed towards problems with conceiving a politics of memory in deliberative terms. For example, as we have seen, such a politics of memory is aimed largely at the majority group without whose support ameliorative policies cannot get off the ground. Yet one might worry that, on this picture, white citizens are envisaged, once again, as the ones to enact emancipatory measures. This risks becoming a paternalistic form of politics, perpetuating

forms of dependency, rather than one based upon self-empowerment. Inversely, one might be concerned that black Americans are once again the object of study which is largely addressed to 'whites.'[26] Much has been written about the connection between knowledge and power and, from a Foucauldian perspective, we might even think that the object of knowledge is ultimately constituted through its interactions with disciplinary techniques and relations of power. This would be another reason to support a more radical Habermasian or Baldwinian picture aimed at interrupting self-understandings rather than correcting the 'black image in the white mind.' But as a more general point, a deliberative politics of memory – certainly one aimed at revealing and explaining the oppression of the minority to the majority group – at least runs the risk of further entrenching narratives of victimhood.

Other writers have questioned the openness of deliberative processes to hearing minority voices, despite the explicit concerns of theorists to do so. In her critique of McCarthy's work, for example, Allen argues his commitment to progress has implications for the way in which deliberation with non-Western voices is imagined. She takes as an example his claim that abandoning the theory and practice of development is 'practically objectionable' due to the 'pressing need for organised collective action on behalf of the poorest and most vulnerable societies' (McCarthy, 2009: 226). Yet at this point, Allen notes a 'telling moment' in his argument. His use of 'on behalf of' instead of 'in solidarity with' is, for Allen, 'indicative of the extent to which McCarthy, notwithstanding his extremely laudable attempt to frame a genuinely open and open-ended intercultural dialogue on the costs and benefits of capitalist modernisation, ends up recapitulating

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[26] Indeed, given the disproportionately white nature of the academy, it is likely that this study would not only be addressed to whites, but also undertaken by them.

certain features of Kantian-style liberal imperialism' (Allen, 2016: 29).[27] She hears echoes of Marx's view of the small peasants who 'cannot represent themselves, they must be represented' (ibid., 30). As such, Allen is questioning the extent to which McCarthy is prepared to make space for and hear the voices of the 'wretched of the earth'[28] or whether, by contrast, he imagines working *for* their emancipation at least in some senses *without* them.[29]

Whilst it is not my intention here to defend the details of either the Foucauldian picture or Allen's critique, the argument I make will overlap with both of these concerns: namely that deliberative politics may downplay or sometimes miss the affirmative, self-emancipatory actions of oppressed citizens. In the rest of this chapter, I argue that there is one important form of political discourse which deliberative democracy theories often miss, namely the speech of those Rancière calls the 'part without a part.' To see why this is the case, I take a detour in the next section through Rancière's critique of Habermas' notion of 'understanding'.[30] I explore firstly how 'understanding' is central to Habermas'

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[27] In particular, she worries his position potentially works against 'unlearning our own values.' For more on unlearning our own values, see chapter two, part two.

[28] I use this expression because we are no longer talking about mere victims but rather those undertaking emancipatory, political action. Fanon's phrase does much better to capture *this* actor, which I suggest can also be described as Rancière's political subject: the part without a part. See Ross for a brief comparison between 'wretched of the earth' as an 'emergent political agency' and the humanitarian victim (2002: 157).

[29] Of course, we might think that this 'telling moment' is nothing but a slip: telling perhaps of McCarthy's own intuitions, but in no way incompatible with a more open version of his account. Indeed, this section of Allen's work has been highlighted for criticism by Davenport who calls it 'offensive and misleading.'

[30] There are, of course, differences between McCarthy and Habermas. McCarthy, as we saw briefly above, has been critical of Habermas' (early) tendency to emphasise system-theoretic concepts at the expense of engagement with the practical activity of social agents which tend 'to recede into the background' (McCarthy cited in Held, 1997: 374). McCarthy's own work has challenged Habermas in this respect. Nevertheless, his account is still heavily influenced by Habermas' work and I suggest it is still vulnerable to Rancière's critique.

work on communicative action before turning to Rancière's discussion of *mésentente*: the French term for disagreement which can more literally be translated as *misunderstanding*.

Part Two: Understanding and Disagreement

As is well known, Habermas' concern in *The Theory of Communicative Action* was to correct what he saw as a misguided over-emphasis on instrumental rationality, as evident in the work of the Frankfurt's School first generation. To do so, he elaborated a form of rationality found in communicative action. Significantly, this entailed a re-evaluation of the importance of *understanding* in rational action, which tends to be downplayed in the more limited case of instrumental rationality. According to Habermas, when instrumental[31] action takes the form of speech, the perlocutionary effects of the speech act take precedence over the illocutionary effects. For example, an imperative aims primarily at bringing about changes in the world which are external to the speech act itself. It does so, moreover, through external threats and sanctions, not by gaining the assent of the other. In communicative action, by contrast, Habermas argues the focus is on the illocutionary aim which is precisely to 'reach… understanding with a hearer about something' (2002: 315). That means the aim is internal to the speech act itself, rather than external and 'parasitic' to it. For this reason, Habermas argues that '[r]eaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech' (2004: 287-288).

But what exactly does Habermas mean by understanding? According to Habermas, the illocutionary aim of communicative action is 'two-tiered: the speech act is first of all

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[31] Or, more accurately, teleological. Habermas distinguishes between instrumental action, where one attempts to achieve something in the external world, and teleological action, where one attempts to influence someone else to act in order to fulfill one's own aims.

supposed to be understood by the hearer and then – so far as possible – accepted' (2002: 315). This brings into play both meanings of the ambivalent German term '*Verständigung:*' namely to understand and to agree. But this only occurs if the speech act is sufficiently comprehensible and acceptable. A speech act is acceptable 'if it satisfies the conditions that are necessary in order that the hearer be allowed to take a "yes" position on the claim raised by the speaker' (Habermas, 2004: 298). According to Habermas, then, in communicative action a hearer judges a speech act by taking a "yes" or a "no" position on the validity claims found within it.[32] Each speech act contains three validity claims: a claim to truth (that what one says accords with the objective world); a claim to rightness (that what one says accords with norms that there are good reasons to think should be assented to); and a claim to sincerity (that one means what one says insofar as it accords with one's other actions). Significantly, this means acceptability is not defined from the perspective of the observer, but only 'in the performative attitude of a participant in communication' – which is to say, in the first or second person – who is in a position to judge the validity claims contained within a speech act (ibid.). In Habermas' words, 'understanding what is said requires *participation* and not merely *observation*' (Habermas, 1995: 27).

If one rejects any of the dimensions of a given validity claim – which, as I show below, must always be possible in communicative action – the speaker and the hearer enter into what Habermas calls 'discourse.' That is to say, the speaker is required to give reasons in support of a given validity claim. Herein lies the rationality of communicative action: that claims can be backed up with reasons through a process of argumentation. Of course, in many situations, the validity claim is not challenged, but in that case, the hearer's assent is

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[32] Note they also have the option of abstaining from judging it, if they are not yet in a position to judge the validity claims.

based on the assumption that the speaker could give reasons if required. As Habermas writes:

> a speaker can *rationally motivate* a hearer to accept his speech act offer because – on the basis of an internal connection between validity, validity claim, and redemption of a validity claim – he can assume the *warranty (Gewähr)* for providing, if necessary, convincing reasons that would stand up to a hearer's criticism of the validity *claim*. Thus a speaker owes the binding (or bonding: *bindende)* force of his illocutionary act not to the validity of what is said but to the *coordinating effect of the warranty* that he offers: namely to redeem, if necessary, the validity claim raised with his speech act. In all cases in which the illocutionary role expresses not a power claim but a validity claim, the place of the empirically motivating force of sanctions (contingently linked with speech acts) is taken by the rationally motivating force of accepting a speaker's guarantee for securing claims to validity. (Habermas, 2004: 302)

We might wonder why a speaker is obliged to provide a warranty for a given speech act. According to Habermas this is because, in refusing to do so, one enters into a 'performative contradiction' against the presuppositions of argumentation. [33] Using

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[33] According to Habermas, there are different presuppositions – derivable through formal pragmatics – which underlie the three irreducible aspects of argumentation: the process, procedure and the product of argument (Habermas, 2004: 25-26). In terms of the product, one needs, for example, a minimal logic of consistency. This means one can derive rules such as 'no speaker may contradict himself' (Habermas, 1995: 87). In terms of procedure, one can derive presuppositions of interaction which are required in order to test validity claims. For example, one may derive the rule that 'a person who disputes a proposition or norm not under discussion must provide a reason for wanting to do so' (ibid., 88). Finally, in terms of process, an argument that is 'rationally motivated' must approximate conditions which are free from repression and inequality in a particular way, so that the only coercion is the force of the better argument and the only other motive is the cooperative search for truth. For example, one can derive the rule that 'every subject

formal pragmatics, Habermas argues we can derive rules which participants must assume are approximately realised or they would not enter into argumentation in the first place.[34] One such presupposition is that speakers will provide a warranty for their claims. If the speaker then refuses to provide a warrant for their validity claim, they fall into a 'performative contradiction.' In other words, 'the content of the assertion to be justified contradicts one of the presuppositions the proponent must operate with if his statement is to be regarded as a justification' (Habermas, 1995: 90-91).

This is important because reaching understanding allows speakers to coordinate their actions and create a binding/bonding force (*bindende*) between them (Habermas, 2004: 302). Habermas writes:

> *communicative rationality* is expressed in the unifying force of speech oriented towards reaching understanding, which secures for the participating speakers an intersubjectively shared lifeworld, thereby securing at the same time the horizon within which everyone can refer to one and the same objective world. (2002: 315)

Habermas sees the binding/bonding force of communicative language as vital to human life. For this reason, one cannot consistently refuse to ground one's justification by withdrawing from communicative interaction altogether and inhabiting a world of mere strategic action.[35] To do so would mean withdrawing from the binding/bonding force of

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with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse' (ibid., 89). This is where Habermas locates the presupposition of the equality of speakers which we can only deny by committing a performative contradiction.

[34] In reality, these rules do not always hold, or ever fully hold, but if they are consistently undermined, speakers will refuse to enter into argument.

[35] '[W]hen a speaker is pursing undeclared ends with perlocutionary acts – ends on which the hearer can take no position as all – or when a speaker is pursuing illocutionary aims on which hearers cannot take a grounded position – as in relation to imperatives – the

language, a position Habermas considers impossible without resulting in suicide or serious mental illness (1995: 100).

Understanding, then, is central to Habermas' picture. It must, moreover, be conceptualised as a form of 'mutual understanding.' This is because, through communicative action, speaker(s) and hearer(s) reach consensus (understanding/agreement) on the meaning of an utterance by rationally understanding/agreeing what makes it acceptable. This consensus, moreover, secures the binding/bonding force of a shared, mutually understood lifeworld.[36]

Yet it is precisely this 'identity between understanding and mutual understanding' that Rancière problematises in his critique of Habermas (D: 44). He complicates the picture by elaborating a different meaning of 'understanding.' The question 'Do you understand?' has two accepted social meanings: one can understand a problem and one can understand an order. But when 'do you understand?' is used as an order in ordinary social usage, it often means that there is nothing for the hearer understand: she need only obey. But in this case, how can the hearer demand reasons for the speaker's validity claim? Rancière writes:

> In the logic of pragmatism, the speaker is obliged, for the success of their own performance, to submit it to conditions of validity that come from mutual understanding. Otherwise, the speaker falls into the "performative contradiction" that undermines the force of their utterance. "Do you understand?" is a

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potential for the binding (or bonding) force of good reasons – a potential which is always contained in linguistic communication – remains unexploited' (Habermas, 2004: 305).

[36] It is also for this reason that theorists of deliberative democracy have found Habermas' work on communicative action so useful.

performative that makes fun of the "performative contradiction" because its own performance, its manner of making itself understood, is to draw the line between two senses of the same word and two categories of speaking beings. The performative gives those it addresses to understand that there are people who understand problems and people who have only to understand the orders such people give them… (Ibid., 45)

Recall that the role of communicative interaction is to coordinate social action and act as a bonding/binding force which secures the shared lifeworld. For Habermas this is secured through understanding which can be rationally assessed and is ultimately underwritten by the speaker's guarantee to provide reasons for her claims. But in the case of the order 'Do you understand?', the bonding/binding force is provided by appeal to the shared horizon which separates supposedly competent from incompetent speakers. By understanding the order within the context of the shared horizon, one identifies oneself as an incompetent speaker and as someone to whom reasons need not be given. As Russell and Montin gloss:

the instruction succeeds as a mode of coordinating social action on condition that the hearer may not adopt a critical attitude towards the speaker's utterances and that the speaker need not provide reasons why the speech act is in fact rationally acceptable.' (2015: 545)

The utterance is, then, a communicative act which secures the 'lifeworld' but works precisely by denying the possibility of interrogating validity claims.[37]

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[37] For this reason, Habermas cannot object that the order 'Do you understand' is a strategic act rather than a communicative act. Rather, it is both strategic – as an

How should we understand this 'shared horizon' which divides competent and incompetent speakers? Rancière thinks – quite reasonably – that our worlds are always divided up in a certain way so that we can make sense of them. For one object to be meaningfully classed as something, another object has to be classed as *not* that thing. An object of our sense perception is linked, for him, to a particular understanding of that object. This occurs through a particular – and contingent – organisation and ordering of objects. For example, a given enunciation may be heard as a request or an order in a given society. Enunciations which do not conform to the given understanding, or the correct societal location, may not be taken (or *count)* as such.[38] This complex matrix, through which we perceive and understand our world, and which determines what counts as what (as well as what counts at all), is what Rancière calls the 'distribution of the sensible'.[39]

The people living within a given society are likewise ordered, and in any number of ways. One simply cannot, Rancière accepts, organise in any permanent way, a utopian society

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imperative – and communicative, insofar as it provides bonding/binding force. It is, moreover, a form of communicative action which presupposes the inequality rather than the equality of speakers (Russell and Montin, 2015: 545-546).

[38] This can be understood as analogous to what Stanley Cavell calls 'mutual attunements.' Nothing guarantees that we understand and project language into new contexts in the same way, but 'on the whole we do' which 'is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humour and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation…' These, he notes, are what Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life' (Cavell, 2002: 52).

[39] In the original French, the expression is '*partage du sensible.*' Here '*partage*' can refer to both sharing and dividing the world. The shared world is always also a divided world. These two levels are less explicit in the English translation 'distribution.' See also the discussion on this in the introduction.

where everyone is equal.[40] On the one hand, without a division between who belongs and who does not, the concept of a *particular* society makes no sense. But similarly, without a distribution of roles and (perceived) capacities and entitlements, there is no social *order* – no society – to speak of. But this order, by its nature, also sets up hierarchies between those who have and do not have particular roles, capacities and entitlements. Rancière famously gives the name 'police' to this societal order (D: 28).[41] The police order is not simply fictitious, it is not necessarily objectionable and indeed 'police' is used by Rancière as a non-pejorative term (Chambers, 2013: 72). Nevertheless, according to Rancière, the unequal police order is not all there is to say about the equality or inequality of 'speaking beings'.[42]

To begin to see why this is the case, we can return to the order 'Do you understand?' Recall that the performative refers to the shared horizon – or distribution of the sensible – which divides competent and incompetent speakers. But there are two possible affirmative responses to the question (D: 46). 'I understand' can mean that the hearer understands that there is nothing to understand because she does not have the same capacity of understanding. That is, by understanding the interrogative, she understands her unequal location in the distribution of the sensible. This means, from her response, we can deduce the inequality of the hearer with the respect to the speaker. We can deduce that there is no mutual understanding. But 'I understand' can also mean that she understands since she participates in the same faculty of understanding. She understands

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[40] Rancière may be well known as perhaps the philosopher of 'radical equality' but this is not the kind of equality he has in mind. See chapter three for a detailed discussion of Rancière's notion of equality.

[41] For more on the police, see chapter two, part three. See also the conclusion for a discussion of Rancière's development of the concepts 'politics' and 'police.'

[42] In one recent formulation he writes that 'inequality can't function on its own' (ME: 112). See chapter three, parts one and two, for a discussion of the equality of 'speaking beings.'

that the speaker is attempting to deny her capacity to understand but that he is lying, since she indeed shares in this capacity. This means we can also deduce her equality with respect to the speaker – her shared capacity to understand – which contradicts the current distribution of the sensible. That is to say, despite the current distribution, there is such a thing as mutual understanding.

But how can speakers who have 'deduced their equality' claim this equality in practice? It is clear they cannot simply appeal to the Habermasian discourse principle of free access to all participants. For:

> properly speaking one is not denied access to discourse since one is thought to have nothing to say that could count as a relevant contribution in the first place. What is needed from the perspective of such disqualified speakers is not a demonstration of the right or requirement of access to discourse but a demonstration of how such a right or requirement might be made politically effective where its relevance is denied. (Russell and Montin, 2015: 546)

The problem here is that certain people are not seen in the current distribution as having a relevant contribution in the first place: excluding them, therefore, does not commit the speaker to a performative contradiction. Likewise, one cannot prove through rational argumentation the fact of their equality by means of a logical deduction. This is because the response, as we have seen, permits of two possible deductions. Instead, for Rancière, the deduction needs to be a starting point which is then demonstrated and verified in

particular, singular acts. [43] Speakers who contest their exclusion are committed to *demonstrating* that there is mutual understanding in understanding. Rancière writes:

> To say there is a common speech situation *because* an inferior understands what a superior is saying means that a disagreement, a provisional confrontation, must be set up between two camps: those who think there is an understanding within understanding, that is, that all speaking beings are equal as speaking beings, and those who do not think so. The paradox is that those who think there is an understanding within understanding are for that very reason unable to take this deduction any further except in the form of a conflict, of disagreement, since they are bound to show a result that is not at all apparent. The political stage, the theatre of a paradoxical community that places the dispute in common, therefore cannot possibly be identified with a model of communication between established partners concerning objects and ends belonging to a common language. (D: 49-50)

As such, one can only effectively challenge one's exclusion by breaking with the framework of Habermasian communicative action and entering into what Rancière calls *disagreement*.

A disagreement, for Rancière, is a dispute in which two interlocutors use the same word but fail to see the same object designated by it. It is not when one says 'black' and the other says 'white', but when both say 'white' and mean something different by it. At its

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[43] As I will explore in chapter three, Rancière's work sets out from the second deduction: the presumption – but not proof – of equality to see where it leads. He presumes people have the capacity to challenge the way that capability is distributed. This is what he calls his 'method of equality.'

most extreme, a speaker fails to see his interlocutor as speaking meaningfully at all: as engaged in a legitimate dispute (ibid.., xi-xii). The speaker's social location within the distribution of the sensible – her assumed incapacity – has rendered her speech inaudible as rational speech and is heard, rather, as noise.[44] Disagreement is therefore paradoxical because those who, in this case, believe in mutual understanding are required to break with the existing conception of mutual understanding. The aim is for one's demonstration to unsettle the bonding/binding force of the shared horizon, or distribution of the sensible, in order for one's speech to be heard not as noise, but as speech. But for Rancière, this does not make the argument irrational. Rather disagreement has its 'own proper rationality' (DIS: 27). In other words, it is a mode of speech which falls between Habermasian communicative action and speech as the irrational 'dark night of power,' a position attributed, rightly or wrongly, to Lyotard (D: 45).

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[44] Note that Rancière, particularly at the beginning of *Disagreement*, discusses the difference between beings that speak and beings that make noise. This is because he is analyzing the Aristotelian distinction between beings who possess logos and those who merely understand it (masters and slaves). This may create some confusion when it comes to modern politics. It is thus perhaps better to understand the distinction as between those who speak rationally or properly on a subject, and those who have nothing relevant to say. We do not deny that they are speaking, but what we hear is no more relevant than sheer noise. Rancière writes 'Doubtless, [by the nineteenth century], it had ceased to be said that the members of the modern proletariat, the equivalent of the plebeians of antiquity, *are not* speaking beings. It is simply assumed that there is no connection between the fact that they speak and the fact that they work. There is no need to explain why there is no connection; it suffices not to see the connection. Those who make the existing order work … can't see the middle term between two identities that might be joined together in the speaking being, who shares a common language, and the labourer, who exercises a specific occupation as an employee in a factory of works for a manufacturer. As a result, they don't see how the lot a labourer receives by way of a wage might become the business of the community, the object of public discussion. (D: 51) See more on the political actor as a speaking being in chapter three, part two. See a critical discussion on the Aristotelian legacy in Rancière's political thought in chapter two, part four.

Disagreement, for Rancière, is the form all political action takes.[45] Politics is therefore distinguished, by Rancière, by the appearance of a subject who is disputing her very capacity to speak. Such a subject, for Rancière, must fulfil three essential criteria (WIS: 212-213). Firstly, as we have seen, the political subject acts on the presupposition of equality. In other words, she takes the deduction of mutual understanding as her starting point. This means rejecting the background assumptions of the current distribution of the sensible and instead assuming that, because one can understand a common language, there is such a common language and that one is speaking competently within it. One is, in other words, what Rancière calls an equal speaking being.[46]

The second criterion is to set up a stage on which to speak (ibid., 212). As we have seen, one cannot simply speak from one's given social location and be taken to be doing so. But to 'set up a stage,' the political subject must break with another aspect of Habermas' model by making arguments which are, at the same time, metaphors (D: 56; Russell and Montin, 2015: 549). One opens up the world by bringing two things together which are not seen to belong through *metaphor*, and at the same time, makes an *argument* as to one's right to be included. As such, one makes a demonstration in both senses of the term. This means that Rancièrian political speech cannot be captured by what he calls the 'supposedly "normal" rules of discussion' (D: 55). These are the rules laid out by Habermas' formal pragmatics: part of which includes separating rational argument and world-disclosing language (2002: 394). The political subject of disagreement thereby undermines the division which Habermas draws between these two forms of speech, yet in a way that avoids Habermas' critique of other French theorists in *The Philosophical*

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[45] I challenge this view throughout this project and argue Rancièrian politics is not the only important form that politics or emancipatory action can take.

[46] I explore what is meant by an 'equal speaking being' further in chapter three, parts one and two.

Discourse of Modernity. This is because it remains an argument: a claim to the validity of certain subjects to speak (D: 55-56; Russell and Montin, 2015: 548).

The final criterion is the need to dis-identify from one's given social location (WIS: 213). One needs to break from the 'police' view of society on the basis of which one's capability has been denied. But for Rancière, disidentification is necessarily complimented by subjectification: whereby one takes on a political subjectivity which is impossible in the given distribution from which one is breaking. One of Rancière's paradigmatic examples is the 1968 assertion 'We are all German Jews' from a group who were sociologically speaking neither German nor Jewish. It might be objected that such political subjectivities are missing from, or only unusual instances of, politics. Yet we can also understand the gap between political subjects and the roles from which they break in less obvious examples. For example, the political subjectivity 'women' breaks with the sociological understanding of 'women' and becomes, in Todd May's terms, the non-sociological *political* category 'women-equal-to-men' (2010: 48).[47]

Taking on a political subjectification also requires one to break with the Habermasian injunction that communicative action is carried out in the first and second person. Indeed, Rancière suggests, if one remains within the first and second person, one remains locked within the given distribution through which one is deemed incapable. Instead, he underscores the importance of the third person to political disagreement. To challenge the distribution, one takes on a political subjectification – a name, a 'we' that does not exist – and addresses a 'they.' For example, when a person speaks as a member of the 99%, one is part of a group which does not exist as a recognisable social category

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[47] I re-evaluate to what extent dis-identification should be required of political actors in chapter two.

in the social order. One also does not directly address the 'you' but the 'they' of the '1%'. For this reason:

> The play of the third person is essential to the logic of political discussion, which is never a simple dialogue. It is always both less and more: less, for it is always in the form of a monologue that the dispute, the gap internal to the logos, declares itself, and more, for commentary sets off a multiplication of persons. (D: 48)

One is no longer taking part in dialogue in a deliberative fashion. In that sense, it is a monologue. Yet those engaged in monologue are new political subjectivities, like the 'German Jews' or the 'women-equal-to-men,' who did not exist in the distribution from which they broke.

Rancière has, then, elaborated a form of political speech which Habermas' deliberative model seems unable to account for. The critique is important, as Russell and Montin write, because:

> any political theory that fetishizes dialogical interaction as the only proper mode of political dispute, as Habermas' political theory does, will be unable to make sense of the way political disputes actually play out… Political theorists ought to be trying to understand all basic modes of political speech and action, and that means understanding those that take place outside deliberative contexts and, as it were, across deliberative contexts as well as those that take place within deliberative contexts. (2015: 551)

A deliberative approach which fails to hear such discourse as political speech at worst silences such speech, and at best 'relegates speakers who engage in it to the margins of political action' (ibid.).[48]

In the rest of this chapter, I want to consider the implications of this critique for conceiving a *politics of memory*. What would a politics of memory look like which understood politics in the aesthetic rather than deliberative sense?[49] I proceed by asking, firstly, what a different practice of history would look like that focused on specifically aesthetic moments of politics. Secondly, I ask what effect 'raising awareness' of these alternative histories would potentially have on present political action. This allows me to develop an alternative politics of memory, which I will then clearly distinguish from McCarthy's both in its *historical* form and in its potential *political* effects.

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[48] In this sense, it functions in is similar way to Honneth's relegation of Rancièrian 'eruptions' of politics as relatively trivial compared to the real business of politics. See chapter two, part two.

[49] In moving directly to developing an alternative conception of the politics of memory, I might be seen to illegitimately presume that, since deliberative politics misses a certain form of political discourse, a deliberative *politics of memory* will also miss aesthetic forms of politics. But need this necessarily be so? For example, a deliberative politics of memory is not explicitly concerned with locating politics in the past: indeed, McCarthy is concerned more with the impact of social history on present day political practice. What impact, then, would missing a certain political form of discourse have specifically for a politics of memory? I will argue that a deliberative politics of memory is extremely unlikely to be able to substitute for an aesthetic politics of memory: in other words, that Rancière identifies a politics of memory which is in all likelihood missed by a deliberative model. However, to make this claim, I need to develop my account of the alternative aesthetic politics of memory before contrasting them. I therefore defer this discussion until the end of part four.

Part Three: Rancière's histories

In one sense, McCarthy and Rancière can be seen to take similar approaches to the study of history. This is because both thinkers can be located within the tradition which responds to the challenge which Walter Benjamin laid out for historians: to practice history which breaks with the standard identification with the winner. In his sixth thesis, Benjamin argued that 'only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins' (2015: 247). With these comments, Benjamin laid down the gauntlet to the practitioners of history. How does one 'brush history against the grain' in order to empathise with history's victims (ibid., 248)? McCarthy explicitly understands himself to be working within the Benjaminian tradition by working to 'revers[e] the usual triumphal identification with history's winners for an anamnestic solidarity with its victims' (2009: 102). Hayden White, in his introduction to *The Names of History* claims that Rancière too 'takes up arms on behalf of Walter Benjamin's idea that the story of victors must be balanced, even supplanted, by the story of the vanquished, the abject, and the downcast of history' (NH: ix). Rancière himself refers to Benjamin at the end of the book (ibid., 102). Yet examining their responses to this challenge allows us to locate their very difference practices of history and historical consciousness-raising.

McCarthy appears to interpret Benjamin's challenge in the following way. Insofar as historical scholarship which expresses solidarity[50] with the victims of history enters the public sphere, public memory reflects a more objective and critical view of the past: one which is concerned with more accurately reflecting historical crimes and their continued

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[50] We can perhaps see a parallel here with Fraser's call for Critical Theorists to adopt a critical solidarity with those engaged in 'struggles of the age' discussed at the beginning of the introduction.

relevance in the present. Such a public politics of memory would be likely, for McCarthy, to improve the outcomes of deliberative decision-making processes and, as such, spread greater hope in the present.

For Rancière, by contrast, this is the wrong way to meet Benjamin's challenge. To pre-empt the story, Rancière argues there is always the potential for 'hope' to be found in the past itself: in the words and actions of the 'wretched of the earth' as they struggle against their social conditions. It is their 'hope' (if this is still the right word) which the historian can bring to light – and which may succeed in changing our perception both of history and, potentially, possibilities in our own present.[51]

To better understand what Rancièrian historical consciousness-raising looks like, I will consider one of Rancière's privileged examples, the worker Gabriel Gauny, whose

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[51] I do not claim that this is how Benjamin understood the task he laid before historians. Here I focus solely on how McCarthy and Rancière have interpreted the task, rather than discussing what Benjamin himself may actually have meant. However, it should perhaps be noted that Benjamin was himself very critical of the notion of progress which McCarthy defends in much stronger terms than Rancière. Historical progress is redefined as the storm which 'irresistibly propels him [the angel of history] into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward' (Benjamin, 2015: 249). Yet as Max Pensky has suggested, it is a mistake to think Benjamin entirely rejects the concept of progress. Rather, he rejects a certain *ideology* of progress, 'whose prevalence foreshortens the experience of historical time, and by doing so rules out a form of memory of suffering, a mode of normative relation with past human beings that Benjamin regards both as morally significant in its own right and practically invaluable as a source of politically motivating rage' (Pensky, 2012: 169). Perhaps McCarthy's account could better give rise to rage through an account of suffering than Rancière's more affirmative account of history. On the other hand, Rancière focuses on the 'overlooked, reviled, marginalised, and trivialised objects' of history (ibid., 168) in order to contribute to the 'reorganisat[ion of] historical memory and expectation in ways that disclose previously occluded possibilities for change' to work against the 'melancholia – *acedia, tedium vitae* – that Benjamin … saw as a perennial threat to the very possibility of political practice' (ibid., 171-172). Kristin Ross has suggested there might be similarities between Rancière's critique of progress in the *Ignorant Schoolmaster* and Benjamin's critique of progression through a homogenous, empty time (Ross in IS: xxi). There are ways, then, in which Rancière's project can indeed be said to be Benjaminian, but elaborating the overlaps between their positions would take more space than I have here.

'experiments' with emancipation are discussed several times in *Proletarian Nights*.[52] One such experiment is Gauny's development of what he calls a 'cenobitic economy.' This was a method inspired by both the Cynics and early Christian monastic communities to reduce his needs in order to purchase the maximum amount of freedom. He seeks above all his independence: the ability to control his own time and work. To this end, he becomes a floor layer who works, usually alone, inside bourgeois homes before their owners have moved in. Gauny does not suffer any illusions about the precarity of the role. He explains the insecurity of his position, how mistakes made are at his expense; and the gruelling physical conditions he works under. Indeed, the price of his 'freedom' is often increased fatigue. But for Gauny, writing in the third person, the 'free' worker 'mortifies his body to give flight to his soul' (cited in PN: 80). In particular, he values the liberation of his senses – his gaze, his hearing – from the sights and sounds of the workshop and the control of the master.

Gauny offers us, however, an odd example of emancipation. He is experimenting with freedom which takes place, for the most part, in fleeting moments. But is reconfiguring your own time within the strict parameters in which you live really a more important emancipation than being freed of the fatigue of work altogether? Are Gauny's experimentations, focused on the reconfiguration of his own time and not the overhaul of structures of domination, not in fact dangerously complicit with prevailing forms of domination? Similar practices today might be seen to include endorsing flexible working or zero hour contracts as emancipatory when in fact they can be seen to represent some of the worst aspects of neoliberal capitalism: often presented as valuable to employees

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[52] In fact, it seems that Gauny *does not count* as a political subject for Rancière. It is not clear whether he has sufficiently undergone a subjectification rather than simply a disidentification with his social role (WIS). As I argue in the conclusion, I am much less interested in giving a narrow definition of politics and suggest we can usefully understand Gauny to be carrying out a political action.

but functioning, in the overwhelming majority of cases, to benefit employers.[53] Gauny's emancipation seems liable to the same criticisms often levelled at certain forms of Foucauldian-inspired 'self-fashioning' or 'care of the self' accounts, which some critics consider deeply complicit with neoliberal society, despite their stated intention to subvert it. In what sense can it be considered an act of emancipation at all?

I argue it is a mistake to reduce what is going on here to individual acts of 'self-fashioning', although clearly in Gauny's case there are overlaps.[54] Instead, to understand the significance of Gauny's act, we should place the emphasis not on the consequences for him as a private individual but rather on how his act disrupted the broader society-wide distribution of the sensible from which he broke. In other words, I am suggesting that it is wrong to say Gauny's act leaves the structures of domination entirely untouched. How then did his speech disrupt the distribution of the sensible and what was the value of this aesthetic emancipatory act?

We can see what is at stake in the following example. On one occasion, Gauny is fitting a floor in a bourgeois home, as yet unoccupied by its owner and becomes captivated by the view from the window:

> Believing himself at home, he loves the arrangement of a room so long as he has
> not finished laying the floor. If the window opens out on a garden of commands
> a view of a picturesque horizon, he stops his arms a moment and glides in

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[53] See for instance https://theconversation.com/flexible-working-is-making-us-work-longer-64045. Accessed: 21 March 2018.

[54] Rancière discusses briefly the overlap between emancipation and 'lifestyle choices' but argues it will never produce 'politics' on its own (Kakogianni and Rancière, 2013: 20-21).

imagination towards the spacious view to enjoy it better than the possessors of the neighbouring residences. (Cited in PN: 81)

For Rancière, this is not simply describing a momentary daydream. Of vital importance is the 'disjunction between his arms, occupied to servile activity, and his gaze escaping through the window' (WIS: 214). In this way, Gauny's gaze – and his aesthetic judgement of what he sees – can be disconnected from his bodily location.

For Rancière, Gauny's gaze was 'naturally associated to some of the formative images and concepts of the very idea of aesthetics' (ibid),[55] perhaps most notably Kant's notion of disinterestedness. For Kant, the first condition for a judgement to count as aesthetic is that it is disinterested which is to say, 'how we judge it in our mere contemplation of it' (1987: 45). By contrast, 'if a judgment about beauty is mingled with the least interest then it is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste' (ibid., 46). When making an aesthetic judgement, we cannot even be concerned about whether the object exists. If, by contrast, when judging a palace we take into account the history of the building and the suffering involved in its construction, then this is no longer an aesthetic judgement.

This can be usefully contrasted with Bourdieu's notion of *distinction* in the book of the same name.[56] For Bourdieu, achieving disinterestedness is an impossible myth – and one

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[55] It was 'natural' due to his training as a philosopher. For Rancière, intelligence works by linking what we do not yet know to what we already do. As a philosopher, Rancière is drawn in this 'chance' encounter with Gauny's work to link the latter's words to his previous knowledge of eighteenth and nineteenth century aesthetics. See chapter three, part one for further discussion of the role of chance in relation to the 'equality of intelligence'.

[56] Indeed, Rancière's more extended criticism of Bourdieu in the *Philosopher and his Poor*, which builds on this idea, was precisely to refute the analysis in *Distinction* 'by emphasising the subversive value of 'disinterest' for the worker' (WIS: 214. See also PP: 165-202).

which serves the interests of the powerful – since aesthetic capacities are more or less determined by the social environment, or *habitus,* in which one finds oneself. People from different social milieus have different standards of taste which disadvantages those from poorer backgrounds whose standards possess far lower 'cultural capital' in society as a whole. But despite Bourdieu's emancipatory ambitions in developing his theory, Rancière argues it has profoundly dangerous consequences. This is because, by understanding words as reflecting their habitus, this approach fails to understand words which were attempting to escape from their social location. Indeed, as I discuss in a moment, for Rancière it is the 'disinterested' ability of the workers to separate their gaze and judgement from their bodily habitus – understood as social location – which 'was the condition that made possible a 'voice of the workers' (ibid.).

For what Gauny is really doing – and what Rancière considers so valuable – is undermining the very category of 'worker'. Gauny, in emancipating himself, does not seek to join the class of masters. He seeks to leave the worker's condition but without joining the bourgeois and taking away the freedom of others. Without becoming bourgeois, he undertakes certain acts *as if* he were. He *takes* privileges for himself usually reserved for them.[57] He 'subvert[s] the order of time prescribed by domination' (PN: xi). As Rancière often argues, the order of domination keeps workers in their place by maintaining there is *no time for anything other than work.* Having time to 'contemplate' his work, to form aesthetic judgements about the view beyond the window, and to publish tracts regarding these experiences, are activities normally reserved for the leisured bourgeoisie and intellectuals. Gauny reconfigures his relationship to time and in so doing, at least temporarily, disconnects the social location of 'worker' from the 'ways of

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[57] For an account of the importance of 'taking' in political action, which bears many resemblances to Rancière's account, see Honig, 2001, especially 99-104 where she uses his work directly.

being' associated with that condition. In this way he 'blurs the boundaries' of the worker identity. In other words, he places this aspect of the distribution of the sensible in which he lives into question.

So whilst the story of a worker gazing out of a window seems insignificant, it demonstrates the ability to act or speak from a location – and with a capacity – not attributable to the workers in that distribution. For Rancière, indeed, it is in the actions of these marginal workers who made the workers' voice possible that the real roots of socialism are to be found. Gauny, it should be noted, is writing in a worker's magazine which could only come into being when workers challenged the limitations of their social identity.[58] To write *at all*, the workers whose stories he tells break out of the identity usually imposed upon them. Their words are, in short, a form of disagreement; insisting that they too are writing poetry or metaphysics and not simply 'making noise.' Before workers could be seen as political, also in the non-aesthetic sense, they needed to challenge the limited 'ways of doing' associated with the old order and this entailed breaking out of the previous distribution. Whilst this was of course important for individual workers engaged in political acts, I have argued they were not mere acts of self-fashioning: crucially, they also had effects on the way the distribution was constituted for those *witnessing* these acts. For this reason, *coming to see acts of politics* is extremely important as I will discuss below.

Gauny's account can be seen as emancipatory, then, insofar as it disrupts the distribution and reconfigures it. Of course, this does not yet explain *how* political acts have longer

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[58] For Rancière, this shows the importance of the 'aesthetic sphere' as 'an essential moment in the modern idea of equality' as the 'first place' where the 'categories, classifications, oppositions and hierarchies, which inscribe the forms of domination within the very structures of perception and sensory experience' are questioned (WIS: 214-215).

term, reconfiguratory effects on the distribution. This is a problem since politics, for Rancière, is a practice of placing 'one world in another' (DIS: 38).[59] Gauny is both worker and bourgeois and for that reason an impossible subjectivity which is neither worker nor bourgeois. It is a superimposition of an untimely, out-of-place, nonsensical body on top of one which is still in this world. But a subject who is holding two incommensurable worlds together cannot be manifesting a 'truer' identity than the one she was previously seen to have; nor is she developing a permanent, new social identity. Indeed, for Rancière, politics comes to an end when one takes on a fixed social identity. This then accounts for the seemingly fleeting, marginal nature of these moments of aesthetic emancipation and the fact they so very often seem to end in failure. But it also presents a puzzle in understanding the long-term *value* of emancipatory acts. In chapter two, I develop an account of Rancièrian disagreement as a form of 'recognition' and show how reconfiguration is a crucial element of this account. As such, I defer the discussion for now and turn instead to examine which *politics of memory* is served by the telling of these histories.

Part Four: Rancière's Politics of Memory

As we have seen, Rancière's historical practice consists in locating marginal, disruptive moments. This is the form of *memory* that his politics of *memory* is concerned with. But it is not yet clear what *political* purpose is served by the retelling of these stories. For McCarthy, a politics of memory potentially leads to better deliberative outcomes, which is to say, it aims at emancipatory outcomes in the present. But why does Rancière tell the stories of past emancipatory events?

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[59] See more on dissensus as 'placing two worlds in one' in chapter two, part three.

A good place to begin examining the question of Rancièrian consciousness-raising is by returning to the relationship between workers and the bourgeoisie in *Proletarian Nights*. It is notable that Rancière is a bourgeois intellectual writing a book about workers in which he is precisely examining the interaction between the intellectual bourgeoisie and workers. As such, the material he discusses should be seen as a direct comment on his own practice. Since, as we now know, emancipation here means 'blurring the boundaries' of the worker identity, there was certainly a role to be played by those outside the category, notably the bourgeoisie. The workers in *Proletarian Nights* did engage with the bourgeoisie both through reading and sometimes in direct discussion, for example with the early bourgeois socialists who were beginning to recruit them. According to Rancière, these exchanges imparted certain 'knowledge' to the workers but it was an:

> empty knowledge, if you will, promising no mastery. Something, however, akin to the transgression that prompted a tasting of the fruits of the tree of knowledge: an unknown relish, a bite from which there can be no recovery, an unsettling in which sensible reality itself seems to vacillate and reel... Nothing has changed, but nothing will ever be the same as before, either… For it is in the moments when the real world wavers and seems to reel into mere appearance, more than in the slow accumulation of day-to-day experiences, that it becomes possible to form a judgement about the world... That is why those other worlds, which supposedly anesthetise the sufferings of the workers, can actually be the thing that sharpens their awareness of such sufferings. (PN: 18-19)

From their contact with the bourgeoisie, then, the workers acquire a 'revelation' of 'other worlds' through which they learn there are other ways of being which do not involve

being exploited. On this picture, the power to judge the intolerability of the world does not come from insight into the workings of domination but from the moments where the world of domination is put into question. This is because the accumulation of knowledge can be as inhibiting as liberating. Understanding the power of vast, oppressive structures can often make them feel more, rather than less inevitable. By contrast, those moments when the inevitability of the structure wavers can be intensely liberating. This occurs perhaps most notably in moments of collective action, when the force of one's opponent seems to waver and possibilities for the future seem to open up. But it can also occur through contact with others who have broken free from, or were never subject to, forces of domination.

Nevertheless, this raises an important question for those wishing to engage in historical consciousness-raising. If one thinks it is domination that must be explained, then this gives the historian – or more broadly, the critical theorist – a clearly defined project.[60] But what is the purpose of historical consciousness-raising on Rancière's picture? If he is not conveying knowledge of domination or producing a 'guidebook' to emancipation, then what is he doing?

The previous quotation only seems to add to the puzzle. For, if all we require is 'empty knowledge,' surely any book – and indeed, not necessarily even a book – could play such a role. There is no way to predict what will make the real world 'waver' for a given individual. Indeed, whether it has the effect does not even depend on the intention of the author. This is the promise – or the danger, given your perspective – of the written word, or what Rancière calls 'mute speech.' On the one hand, it does not talk enough. It

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[60] For more on the role of the Rancièrian Critical Theorist, see the conclusion. For more on the role of the 'pedagogue' who does not explain, see chapter three, part three.

cannot answer questions or defend itself against alternative interpretation. But on the other, it chatters indiscriminately to anyone who can get their hands on it, including those for whom it was not intended (MS: 93-94). What is clear in Rancière's picture is that bourgeois knowledge – and in particular bourgeois knowledge addressed to the workers – is not required for worker emancipation.

But what, then, is the *specific* purpose of writing a book which recounts the stories of past emancipation? Perhaps, we might think, Rancière could be primarily concerned with producing a more 'accurate' history by restoring missing voices to our historical memory. That is to say, it could be that it has no specific relevance for the present at all, beyond a concern with how one should practice history. Yet this seems implausible since restoring missing voices to history sounds like giving them a 'proper place' within history and, as we have seen, Rancièrian politics aims precisely at undermining any idea of having a 'proper place.' As I explain below, he likewise aims at destabilising academic history and ultimately the divisions between all academic disciplines. As such, it simply cannot be the case that Rancière is telling us the 'proper way' to practice history.

This suggests, then, that the motivation for 're-telling histories' does indeed come from a concern for the present. Yet this seems to be confounded by the explicit rejection by the collective *Les Révoltes Logiques*, in which Rancière was a key member, of the idea that the past could have any pedagogical role to play for the present in the form of 'lessons delivered' (Ross, 2002: 128). But if this is the case – if there are no lessons to be learnt today from the emancipatory actions of Gauny and others – then why was the book written in the first place?

I suggest that this statement – that the past has no pedagogical role to play – is potentially misleading. We must separate the idea of 'pedagogy' which will be criticised by Joseph Jacotot, in which we presume the incapacity of the audience and guide them to new knowledge,[61] and the idea that we can 'learn' something from the past. For whilst *Proletarian Nights* is not telling us how to emancipate ourselves, or even that we should emancipate ourselves, there is surely a lesson of sorts: not how we should blur the boundaries but *that there is something emancipatory about the practice of 'blurring the boundaries.'* It also asserts that these boundaries have been blurred – that equality has been demonstrated – by ordinary people throughout history, in very different ways and with very different results. This is not explained to us, but demonstrated to us, through the use of affirmative examples.[62]

I suggest, then, that Rancière is concerned with 'raising awareness' of the possibility and existence of acts of politics. Given the unequal distribution in which we live and through which we make sense of the world, these political demonstrations of equality where we did not expect them underline the contingency of the connections between a social location and the ways of being connected to that location. By re-telling stories of actors blurring the boundaries of social identities, we are potentially unsettled regarding the identities – the ways of doing, being and saying – that we take ourselves and others to possess. It opens, in short, an extended realm of possibility. According to Kristin Ross, who is glossing Rancière's project:

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[61] I discuss Jacotot and the critique of stultification further in chapter three.
[62] For more on Rancière's affirmative critique, see the conclusion. For more on affirmative educational practices, see chapter three, part three.

The past allows a certain vigilance in the present, the ability to know when a choice must be made, a choice that is contingent and singular, and not the product of repetitive structures or determinations. (Ibid., 128-9)

This means that Rancière's histories are ultimately targeted very precisely at the way we understand ourselves and others. In this sense, his project has interesting parallels with those of Habermas and McCarthy. Yet whereas the latter thinkers challenge the self-understanding of dominant groups through engagement with past violence and knowledge of domination, Rancière challenges the way we conceive of our own field of possibility. I therefore suggest that Rancière is engaged less in consciousness-raising through which we can better make 'sense' of things than a form of 'sense-scrambling'. This historical sense-scrambling has the potential to loosen the reader's attachment to the 'ways of being' attached to specific social locations. In this way the stories of 'hope' in the past can also increase the likelihood that we pursue a 'politics of hope' in the present.[63]

This also demonstrates the different target of Rancière's account to McCarthy's. He is not predominantly talking to the dominant group, he is speaking *with* the 'wretched of the earth'. It is the possibilities of the oppressed which concern him the most. But this does not mean either political action or sense-scrambling would have no impact on dominant groups. It might also help change the perception of all groups insofar as we become more attuned to 'events' which break with the given distribution. Ross writes:

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[63] This has important parallels with what Tyson Lewis calls 'perceptual alienation.' For Lewis, coming to see differently through 'perceptual alienation' can be differentiated from consciousness-raising, which is more directed and deliberate. See more in chapter three, section three.

Praxis might, then, entail a kind of watchfulness or attention to these intermittent manifestations [or events], to the moments when, in fact, something is happening. To happen, events must be perceived and acknowledged as such. Rancière's work contributes to making the moment when such demonstrations are produced more visible. (Ibid., 29)

This means we might not only be more aware of the possibility of acting politically; we might also be better able to see – more *attuned* to – acts of politics which have either happened in the past or are happening today, before our eyes.[64]

This means that, like McCarthy, Rancière shows us that engagement with history has a potential *political* effect and we are now in a position to pinpoint the differences between the 'politics of memory' as presented by McCarthy and Rancière. McCarthy envisages a rational public discussion, informed by an objective yet empathetic history, which aims primarily at changing how the victors of history – in this case, white Americans – perceive themselves and others. He suggests this would promote a better understanding of the history behind present-day social structures, which in turn would allow whites to acquire both a more accurate 'black image' and, I have suggested more importantly, change their 'self-understanding.' This would make them more likely to support policies to address racial injustice, of which they would not be the direct beneficiaries. As such, this politics of memory would hopefully improve deliberative outcomes.

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[64] As such, Rancière's approach to history is similar to his approach to literature. According to Ross, history 'is given much the same power as Rancière grants to fiction: that of reframing, and thus expanding, perception, reconfiguring what is thinkable' (Ross, 2009: 25). I expand on this in the conclusion, where I discuss Rancière's use of concepts in his critical theory.

Rancière, by contrast, tells histories of past emancipatory acts in which actors seek to break out of the confines of their social identities by presuming their equality. These marginalised political voices from the past have long been ignored since their actions often fail to *make sense* to us as emancipatory. By hearing these histories, our attachment to the existing distribution may be loosened. As such, Rancière's very different 'politics of memory' is perhaps better understood as sense-scrambling than consciousness-raising. This has at least two political consequences. Firstly, it aims to increase the likelihood of those hearing these stories to undertake acts of politics today. Past emancipatory acts may make us, as potential *participants*, more aware of the moment of choice in the present. By highlighting the contingency of a given distribution and the patterns of inequality located within it, we are likely to be more aware of the possibility of presupposing our equality and acting upon it. Secondly, as *observers*, it aims to increase our awareness of 'events', or acts of politics, which have occurred and do occur. It might help it easier to 'see' beyond our current distributions and hear acts of politics as speech and not noise. Since radical democratic politics, for Rancière, must be seen in order to have an effect (OSP: 86), such work also promotes the likelihood of successful politics occurring. Thus whilst McCarthy's politics of memory aims to improve the quality of deliberative politics, a Rancièrian politics of memory aims, more fundamentally, to make aesthetic politics more likely to occur – and be taken to occur – in the first place.

But why exactly would a deliberative politics of memory fail to hear voices like Gauny's and include a retelling of their stories? I think there are at least two reasons why this is extremely unlikely. Firstly, failing to hear the discourse of the part without a part as political presents an omission from our understanding of what emancipation means and what emancipatory action entails. Without recognising these voices as expressions of an important form of emancipation, with properly political consequences, we would have

no reason to seek out and focus on these acts. Yet if we do not identify these voices as expressing a seized moment of possibility in the past, we cannot aim to have the effects in the present which I have suggested a Rancièrian politics of memory might have.

But could a deliberative politics of memory not miss the political valence of these voices and still hear them? After all, a politics of memory need not only focus on the *political* voices of the past: McCarthy's certainly does not. As we have seen, he focuses on exploring structures of domination and indeed notes the importance of hearing the voices of the oppressed and the downtrodden. So why should we think a deliberative politics of memory would necessarily ignore Gauny's voice? I want to turn the question around. Gauny might not *necessarily* be ignored, but what good reason would one have to listen to his voice if his speech is viewed only as representing his social location rather than breaking from it? Within a context of deliberative politics, where the aim is to improve deliberative outcomes, what value does Gauny's account of his gaze have, especially if it is seen as a moment of self-fashioning, complicit with the structures of domination, and he is seen as deluded with respect to his own emancipation? Rancière's political actors are not expressing the status of victims, and thus potentially promoting the rage which Benjamin saw as so important to motivate political action (Pensky, 2012: 171-2). But neither are these the heroic, inspirational figures of 'mainstream' political action. Instead, these speakers have often been seen as trivial, their 'demonstrations' confused and their emancipatory action a failure.

There is therefore a double problem. If we do not hear their voices as political, we do not see their actions as emancipatory and focus on them as examples of possibility opening up in the past: in some senses we do not hear them at all. If we hear them as representing their social location – as an account of a worker gazing out of the window –

then it is hard to see what would motivate the retelling of that story and what possible effect it might be expected to have. For both reasons, the forms of history brought into deliberative processes are unlikely to focus on past acts of aesthetic emancipation. This is a missed opportunity, I have suggested, since it is these acts which have the two specific – and specifically aesthetic – effects on the conduct of politics in the present.

Rancière can therefore be seen to be offering a politics of memory which is not only different from, but in all likelihood *missed* by, McCarthy's deliberative politics of memory. The question which remains then is whether we can simply supplement McCarthy with Rancière in order to combine their insights, or whether there is a more fundamental tension between them? To investigate this question, I ask whether 'consciousness raising' might potentially undermine 'sense scrambling.' This analysis also contributes to the broader question of how complementary deliberation and disagreement are as political strategies.

Part Five: McCarthy with Rancière?

For Rancière, there are at least two ways that McCarthy's model might actively work against aesthetic emancipation. The first is the fact that, from his perspective, it *presupposes inequality* insofar as it explains an unequal social structure to those who are presumed not yet to understand it. But for Rancière, emancipatory effects cannot result from the presupposition of inequality. Since I address this concern in the third chapter, I defer discussion of it for now. In the rest of this chapter, I ask instead what effect a better understanding of social location might have on Rancière's second criterion: that political subjects dis-identify from their social roles. How might the very different focus

on understanding social identity and identifying processes of dis-identification be in tension?

To explore this question, I return to Rancière's practice of history. To hear the voices of the past, Rancière argues the historian's practice of history must be brushed *radically* against the grain. He argues we must recognise the deep complicity of the *discipline* of history in undermining emancipatory action, both in the past and the present. Given that McCarthy operates with a more traditional approach to history, I ask whether he too can be seen to potentially undermine emancipatory action.

But what exactly is problematic about conventional academic history? For Rancière, the problem arises at the moment history tries to 'found' itself as a *scientific* discipline. For history *to count as such* – and not as chronology or mere 'story' – it must conform to certain criteria. This, Rancière argues, poses a particular problem in the 'age of democracy.' Kings, battles and the actions of great men are no longer considered the sole proper objects of history. New objects emerge: the people, the masses, women, children, the subaltern and so on. But, Rancière suggests, a problem emerges here for historians, since they must now take into account a veritable 'explosion' of words with which the royal 'biographers' never had to trouble themselves. What is one to do with these words? For Rancière this is a dilemma for history since:

> either it is reduced to the chronicling of proper names that no longer organise any legitimacy of discourse or any meaning of history – monographs on a combat or a militant, on a party, a union, or a newspaper; or it is the science that restores these surface individualities and agitations to their foundation, by determining the subterranean realities of which they are the local and punctual expression. But,

between the proper names of chronicling and the common names of science, it is the very material and discourse of history that once again runs the risk of vanishing: its material, which is to say the speech event… (NH: 96)

History as a discipline certainly wants to do more than just tell stories. But to make history 'scientific', one needs to find a way to organise and prioritise these words and to give the most plausible interpretation of their meaning. According to Rancière's picture of academic historical practice, one does so by placing these words in their given social location and within their wider political, social, cultural and economic context. In this sense, the words are seen as expressions of a 'deeper' reality: their proper meaning is ultimately to be sought outside themselves.[65] As Ross argues:

> Social science in general spends its time making the people who don't resemble their moment get back into the harness, making any aberrant speech fit the context – and in so doing affirming not only the noneventfulness, but the unknowingness, even the duped nature, of the objects of history as well – making them at one with the beliefs of their era … The people are people who can't think otherwise. (Ross, 2009: 27)

In short, the historian risks making the same mistake as Bourdieu as examined above. She risks explaining what out-of-place speech acts 'really mean' based on the speaker's perceived social location. But by returning the speech to the distribution from which it

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[65] For similar reasons, he rejects any approach which make people's words the 'mere expressions' of their social conditions. Historians, sociologists and other experts fail to hear the voice of the 'wretched of the earth' when they explain what they 'really meant.' I discuss this above in relation to Bourdieu and further in chapter three, part two.

emerged, one fails to see the way it challenges and shifts this distribution.[66] On this interpretation, the historian's practice – even when acting in good faith – risks silencing the 'wretched of the earth' all over again.

Indeed, it was Rancière's growing awareness of his own 'silencing' which prompted him to shift his own practice. During his archival work into workers' writings of the 1830s and 1840s, Rancière expected to find workers proclaiming their dignity as workers and developing a class consciousness, as Marxist theories suggested. Yet instead he found workers like Gauny engaged in such unusual activities as debating metaphysics and writing poetry. They were seeking not to emancipate themselves collectively as workers but *rather to escape from the condition of worker.* As we have seen, it was these workers Rancière came to focus on since, he asks, 'Is it possible that the quest for the true word compels us to shush so many people?' (PN: 11)

Here I will refrain from judging the validity of his criticism of the whole academic discipline of history, which I am in any case not in a position to make. There are certainly some approaches to history which appear more susceptible to criticism than others, and it is notable that Rancière focused on the Annales School, whose emphasis of the *longue durée* is well known.[67] However, it has been suggested that some 'academic' historical approaches, such as the one used by Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class,*

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[66] For a parallel discussion, see consideration of the claim 'I am a Mohawk' in chapter two. The border guard's interpretation 'explained' the claim in the terms of the given distribution and thus failed to hear it as political at all.

[67] Fernand Braudel's work *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* discusses three forms of time: geographical time which undergoes almost undetectable change; the *longue durée* of social, economic and cultural history where patterns can be detected over several centuries; and the *courte durée* of events and 'individuals with names'. For Braudel, this is a surface level of deceptive appearances, whose significance is ultimately to be sought in the two previous forms of time. It is therefore clear why Rancière had this particular approach in mind when writing *The Names of History.*

come very close to Rancière's own practice (Watts, 2010: 112). Watts has also highlighted how the practice of history has moved on from statistical and structural history since Rancière's interventions and notes in particular the writings of Spivak, feminist history, subaltern studies and the work of Ranajit Guha. He writes:

> Readers of Rancière have been quick to pronounce on the radical innovation of his theories, but it seems to me that the real strength of Rancière's writing can be located in its alliances with scholars and artists working outside France and thinking, like Rancière, about the relation between the production of knowledge and egalitarian practices. (Ibid., 113)

Instead of viewing Rancière as making a unique contribution, then, we can usefully read him alongside other – often postcolonial – approaches which also investigate the 'part without a part'. I think Watts' suggestion into possible alliances with 'postcolonial' histories is well worth pursuing further. Indeed, since many of these histories are already concerned with contesting empire, there may well be much useful work for a Rancièrian politics of memory which re-examines the British Empire to draw on. Yet at the same time, we must be careful not to assume Rancière's historical practice can be simplistically equated with 'history from below'. As we have seen, he focuses on the out of place voices from the archives: not glorious and heroic freedom fighters or the suffering voices of the oppressed. His work follows the attempts of subjects to break out of the limitations their unequal social location imposes on them, in sometimes spectacular but often mundane form. Whilst, as I argue in chapter two, these acts can have potential reconfiguratory effects on the social world, very often they fail to produce the happy ending that 'emancipation' tends to evoke. So whilst Rancière's histories should be seen

as a form a 'history from below' might take, they only represent one very limited example of a far broader project.[68]

It therefore seems highly unlikely to me that a strong form of Rancière's criticism can be upheld: namely that the discipline of history *necessarily* silences voices from the past. However, I think a weaker form of his criticism can be defended: that there is always the risk that historical practices which seek to 'locate' past voices *could* ignore, marginalise or misinterpret the attempt to move out of place. Integrating these historical practices into a politics of memory, as McCarthy suggests, could have problematic consequences for the uptake of aesthetic politics. This is because, as Rancière suggests, developing a better understanding of structures of domination could actually work to hide emancipatory practice insofar as the effort to understand subjects better may tie them more closely to their social location. On the one hand, words and actions which do not make sense in this context, but which might turn out to be emancipatory, may be even harder to hear as speech and not noise. For example, McCarthy's proposal that understanding the words and actions of ghetto residents as expressions of long-term social conditions and configurations might make it even harder to make sense of words which break with that context. That is to say, instead of promoting our ability to see aesthetic acts of politics, it might inadvertently train us against seeing them. On the other hand, the practice of better understanding the condition of marginalised groups might potentially, and again inadvertently, enforce the view of the 'incapacity' of socially oppressed groups. Work which explains the 'facts' of inequality might make the social order appear more, rather

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[68] Indeed, history from below in a more general form is much more easily brought into deliberative politics. It is far easier to see the potential benefits of integrating, for example, the voices of the oppressed into a deliberative approach than Rancière's specific focus on the voices which move 'out of place.'

than less, inevitable. For these reasons, a successful deliberative politics of memory could potentially work to make Rancièrian aesthetic politics less likely.

I suggest that Rancière's account therefore not only presents us with a distinct and important model of a politics of memory, but a cautionary warning as to the potential dangers of the more mainstream model to which we should remain attentive. Like Rancière, we should we wary of any historical or political practice if it can be shown to 'shush' other people. But this is not a reason to reject McCarthy's approach outright as necessarily complicit with the victors of history. Rather, it is a call for careful scholarship to consider which acts and voices his approach could be undermining and at worst silencing. As such, I suggest can therefore see McCarthy's and Rancière's accounts of the politics of memory as engaged in a precarious alliance – potentially complementary but with the former always at risk of suppressing the effectiveness of the latter.

Yet there are two unresolved questions which have arisen during this chapter. Firstly, as I have indicated, there is another problem with McCarthy's model from a Rancièrian perspective, namely what he call its 'presupposition of inequality'. It presupposes inequality for Rancière insofar as it works on the assumption that the other does not yet understand the 'truth' and is in need of the historian or critical theorist's explanation to come to understand it. But this is a problem according to Rancière, since he makes the radical claim that presupposing inequality can never have emancipatory results. Of course, this critique – if it can be upheld – does not only affect the compatibility of Rancière's and McCarthy's work, but Rancière's relationship with the Frankfurt School more broadly. As such, I examine this counter-intuitive claim in chapter three in my discussion of emancipatory education practices, arguing ultimately for a more nuanced

conception of 'explanation' which would make certain modest forms of 'consciousness-raising' compatible with Rancière's 'method of equality'.

Before that, however, I turn to the second problem. Above I defended the importance of Gauny's aesthetic emancipation insofar as it constituted a shift in the distribution of the sensible not only for how the individual perceives the social order, but potentially for all those living within it. But I also suggested such a shift should not be understood as a mere disruption. Instead, I claimed that dissensus entails a second moment of reconfiguration. This is important, since without some account of longer term effects, it would be unclear what the value of aesthetic political emancipation might be. However, given the sharp divide Rancière tends to draw (or at least tends to be perceived to draw) between political acts and the social order, many critics have argued that reconfiguration cannot be accounted for on his model. I explore this question in the next chapter through an investigation of a second emancipatory practice: struggles for recognition. I read Rancière both with and against the recognition theorist Axel Honneth to examine not only the longer term effects of acts of dissensus, but also the relationship between disagreement and recognition. The aim of the next chapter, then, is to offer not only a more thorough understanding of Rancière's politics, but also to examine what his analysis adds to the way we conceptualise recognition struggles.

Chapter Two: Recognition Interrupted

The concept of recognition has gained increasing prominence theoretically in the last three decades. Since the early 1990s, critical theorists, sociologists, political theorists and others – perhaps most notably Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser and Iris Marion Young – have increasingly examined the idea of recognition as being central to political struggles and conceptions of justice. In so doing, they seem to be responding to an earlier real world shift away from class based politics and towards 'identity politics' and the 'new social movements' which became more prominent from the 1970s onwards. This shift in focus was further reinforced by the collapse of the Soviet Union which prompted certain theorists to claim we had reached the 'end of history' and could look forward to a stable future in which liberal capitalist democracies had definitively triumphed over other political and economic alternatives (Fukuyama, 1989). In what Nancy Fraser calls our 'postsocialist condition' (1997: 1), recognition has been seen as a productive and persuasive paradigm for understanding justice and the struggle to achieve it.

Despite – or perhaps because of – the prominence of the concept of 'recognition' in political and critical theory, Thompson complains it is often used 'indiscriminately' (2006: 160). In many formulations, he argues, recognition appears as a 'one-off, one-way act which is directed towards a single object' (ibid). Here, there is no mutual recognition, since 'the party that judges is not affected by the attitude to it of the party that is being judged' (ibid.). It is also considered a one-off act or condition rather than part of a dynamic process. This chapter focuses on struggles for recognition in a more nuanced sense, starting from the work of perhaps the most prominent and careful theorists of

recognition, Axel Honneth. The strengths of Honneth's account lie not only in the conceptual rigour with which he examines recognition struggles, but also the mutual and dynamic account of recognition with which he works. On his account, recognition is reciprocal since its meaning and worth depends on the value both parties place on each other; and it is considered a dynamic process rather than the acknowledgement of an existing state of affairs (ibid., 160-161). Mutuality is important, I suggest, to conceptualise how struggles for recognition affect not only the party that struggles but also those already recognised. At the same time, I suggest, we need a dynamic account of recognition that allows for change to occur during the process. This is particularly important to avoid reifying the newly recognised party within her existing, subordinate identity.[1]

Yet whilst there are many advantages to Honneth's approach, it has faced widespread criticism. Perhaps best known is Nancy Fraser's dispute with Honneth, where she argued against his use of recognition as the primary lens through which to understand justice (Honneth, 1995; Honneth in Fraser and Honneth, 2003) and instead advocated a 'perspectival-dualist framework' in which both redistribution and recognition are central without either taking precedence (Fraser in Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 200; see also Fraser, 1997 especially 11-39; for a different argument for the necessity of both concepts see Tully 2000). The dispute here, however, is not whether recognition is an important concept for understanding justice but whether it should constitute a 'monological' framework. Others, however, have disputed the usefulness of the concept of recognition more broadly, and not only those who still analyse justice as primarily a matter of

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[1] Wendy Brown has made perhaps the most trenchant critique of the 'wounded attachments' which might come from such recognition. She argues this risks creating a politics of '*ressentiment*' and fetishizing the wound where one was injured (Brown, 1995: 52-76).

redistribution. Some have argued that recognition theorists tend not to sufficiently take power relations into account and therefore cannot investigate the intricate ways in which one can be recognised and subordinated at the same time (Allen, 2010; McNay, 2008). In a related but separate critique, others have argued that recognition theorists *misrecognise* the finite, plural human condition, as a result of which striving for recognition can itself lead to subordination (Markell, 2003).[2] Postcolonial theorists have also long questioned the possibility of recognition in the colonies: a concern raised perhaps most famously by Fanon (2008). More recently, and partially building on Fanon's earlier work, theorists of indigenous politics have questioned the good of recognition – particularly state recognition – and asked whether, and to what extent, recognition actually reinforces, rather than overcomes, colonial domination (Povinelli, 2002; Simpson, 2014; Coulthard, 2014).

Building on these more substantial criticisms, in this chapter I examine how and to what extent the 'politics of refusal' that Audra Simpson documents in her book *Mohawk Interruptus* challenges Honneth's work on recognition. In particular, I focus on how her analysis disrupts what I show to be one of Honneth's key conceptual postulates: the telos of an undistorted self-identity at which recognition struggles supposedly aim. As I show

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[2] For Markell, the finite human condition within a context of plurality means we are unable to be fully sovereign with respect to the interpretation of our actions. Markell suggests the search for recognition is a desire for this impossible sovereignty: a desire for our identity to determine our actions. But this desire for an impossible sovereignty can mean that, for Markell, 'the pursuit of recognition itself may be implicated in the formation and maintenance of unjust relations of social power. In Hegel's story, [master and slave as read by Markell] the trouble with the one-sidedness of the act of abdication that ends the struggle for recognition is not only that it leaves the self-consciousness who becomes master in a condition of ontological ignorance, doomed to pursue a fantasy of sovereignty he cannot attain; it is also that the strategies he employs in pursuit of that impossible fantasy involve the subjection and unfreedom of others' (Markell, 2003: 112). Pursuing recognition, on this picture, results from a failure to acknowledge one's own condition and this failure of acknowledgement 'founds a structure of subordination' (ibid., 113).

in part one, for Honneth, recognition struggles are motivated by distortions between one's self identity and the way that individual is viewed by the world. He argues that successful recognition struggles address this distortion and bring about conditions which allow for the further self-realisation of both parties. Whilst Honneth recognises that the telos of a fully undistorted self-relation is only an ideal, he argues it needs to be postulated in order to explain why and how struggles for recognition occur. In the second section, however, I will problematise this hypothesis and argue that such a telos cannot be viewed even as an ideal due to its over-emphasis on reconciliation[3] and its failure to recognise both the possible harms of recognition and the potential value of misrecognition.

I will argue that whilst Simpson's analysis does not present a case for rejecting the concept of recognition outright, it does suggest we conceptualise at least certain recognition struggles differently.[4] I will focus on one element of such recognition: the way political acts interrupt the world in which they appear. I suggest that Rancière's account of aesthetic emancipation can explain how these reconceptualised 'recognition'[5] struggles can change the conditions through which 're'-cognition – which is to say, categorising according to a pre-established 'distribution of the sensible' – takes place. I suggest this gives us an account of recognition which is both mutual and dynamic,

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[3] In part two, I explain in detail the ways in which I consider Honneth's account to be one of 'reconciliation' and why this particularly form of reconciliation is problematic. Note this is distinguished from a cruder account of 'liberal recognition'. I do not rule out that we might define reconciliation in different, more agonistic terms which may be more compatible with the account I advocate in part three.

[4] I therefore accept that some, or even many, recognition struggles may well aim at the form of reconciliation which Honneth postulates, and that his analysis may be useful for understanding such cases. However, here I focus on a particular recognition struggle which I argue his analysis cannot capture.

[5] Here, recognition is in scare quotes to indicate it is understood differently to its usage both in everyday language and in Honneth's work. It also recognizes the disputed nature of the claim that Rancière is talking about a phenomenon which we can sensibly call recognition. I argue this is the case in part three.

although in a different way to how Honneth uses these terms. Briefly, I suggest it gives us a mutual account insofar as reconfiguring the distribution changes the perceptual schema of oppressor and oppressed, which changes for both how they perceive the world, the other and themselves.[6] Meanwhile, Rancière's emphasis on dis-identification and subjectification enables us to conceptualise a more radically dynamic process, which is nevertheless non-teleological and avoids the problematic reconciliatory tendencies I suggest we find in Honneth.

Nevertheless, turning to Rancière raises two important questions. Firstly, it is not clear how Rancière's radically disruptive picture can be understood as recognition. As many critics have noted, he seems not to adequately allow for an account of reconfiguration. In particular, they have questioned whether the division Rancière draws between politics and police is too sharp to enable political action to have reconfiguration effects. I argue a meaningful account of reconfiguration can be found in Rancière's work and takes the form of 'egalitarian inscriptions'. Specifically, I explore how equality is inscribed both in legislation and in social practices. I then argue that a 'porous' account of politics and police provides not only a better reading of Rancière, but also a way to conceptualise how reconfiguration takes place. As such, we can take seriously both the disruptive effects and the potentially reconstructive consequences of dissensus. I therefore argue Rancière provides us with an account of a phenomenon we can meaningfully call 'recognition,' one with which we can analyse struggles which seek to disrupt the categories through which 're'-cognition occurs without presupposing an ideal reconciliatory telos. This also allows me to address the question of the long-term value of acts of dissensus raised in chapter one.

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[6] This means that my use of 'mutual' is different to the mutuality found in Honneth's account. I can perhaps be seen to be *disagreeing* with Honneth here. I discuss mutuality in Honneth in part one below.

Secondly, it is not clear that Rancière's picture can adequately explain what is going on in the case of the Mohawk interruptions I examine. In the final section, I discuss how Rancière's three criteria for the appearance of a political subject – building a stage, disidentification and presupposing equality [7] – apply in the case of one particular disruptive appearance. I argue we can retain all three criteria but, following Tina Chanter, only if we accept that the political subject does not always act in 'the name of anyone.'[8] As such I make an important modification which affects – without rejecting – the concepts of equality and identification in Rancière's work. I then suggest two ways in which the porous account of politics and police examined in section three allow us to address two further potential problems with extending Rancière's analysis to these indigenous struggles.[9]

In turning to Rancière to discuss recognition – and indeed, in reading Honneth and Rancière together – I am influenced by recent debates in the literature. Jean-Philippe Deranty goes furthest, arguing that Rancière is a 'critical participant in the ethics of recognition' (Deranty, 2003a: 153) and that his 'fundamental political concern is the denial of recognition experienced by the dominated.' (ibid., 137). Such a claim is supported by Rancière's more recent claim in an encounter between Rancière and Honneth to have constructed a '"Rancièrian" conception of the theory of recognition' (RoD: 85). Indeed, in the edited introduction to that debate, *Recognition or Disagreement*,

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[7] See also chapter one, part two for a discussion of these three criteria.

[8] See the end of the introduction, the conclusion and part four below for the way Rancière's part without a part can be made applicable to other struggles beyond worker struggles.

[9] It is also possible that a loosening of the requirement to dis-identify with one's social role makes the precarious reconciliation between Rancière and McCarthy, examined in chapter one, easier to manage. It may reduce the tension between understanding social location and seeing acts and actors which disidentify from it.

Deranty goes so far as to flesh out what he calls Rancière's 'in-principle agreement' with Honneth's theory of recognition (Deranty in RoD: 37).[10]

Yet it is important to note the difference that motivated the two thinkers to 'turn towards recognition,' if it can even be argued that Rancière has made such a turn. In fact, it is striking that neither examines recognition primarily for its own sake. Rancière has only spoken about 'recognition' in the recent public debate with Honneth and, as I explain in part two, placed his own account of politics into Honneth's terms in the form of what he himself describes as a *disagreement* (RoD: 83).[11] As we saw in chapter one, disagreement in Rancière's terms refers to a situation where two people use the same word to refer two different objects. At its most extreme, one cannot see the object to which one's interlocutor is referring; or indeed see one's interlocutor as speaking meaningfully at all (D: xii). This is another reason for investigating, in the fourth section, whether Rancière is really talking about a phenomenon *recognisable as recognition*.[12] Whilst,

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[10] These agreements are as follows. Firstly, Deranty argues that Rancière's political studies are 'extracted from' – indeed, are the 'generalisation' of – his earlier studies on worker emancipation which were examined in the previous chapter (Deranty in RoD: 39; 74). In these studies, Deranty argues, the language of recognition was often used explicitly by Rancière and through a generalisation from proletarian struggles to all egalitarian emancipatory struggles, recognition continues to play a central role. Secondly, Rancière and Honneth both conceive of a struggle for recognition as 'contain[ing] a key performative power whereby the political subject is transformed by, and in a sense is born out of, the political process' (ibid., 42). That is to say, as we have seen above, they both conceive of recognition as a dynamic process. If the result of Honneth's struggle for recognition is 'mostly a de-identification' (RoD: 109) then it seems possible that the two theorists will have much more in common than we might first imagine.

[11] Rancière writes that he 'will try to identify the kind of disagreement between *recognition* and *disagreement* that can make the discussion fruitful' (RoD: 83). For a more detailed account of Rancièrian disagreement, see chapter one, part two.

[12] In a recent short response, Devin Zane Shaw (2017) rejects the way in which Deranty and his co-editor Katia Genel bring Honneth and Rancière together, or rather for Shaw, subsume Rancière to Honneth. He casts doubt on their 'in-principle agreement' given Deranty's other admissions that 'Rancière just disagrees with some of the key concepts used by Honneth in his own theory of recognition' (Deranty in RoD: 36). Shaw suggests that we can only focus on an 'in principle' agreement by 'sacrificing precisely those parts of [Rancière's] thought that are the most inventive, interesting, and politically and

as I have indicated, I will argue that Rancière can provide a meaningful and important account of 'struggles for recognition,' I suggest his conceptualisation of such struggles is an *alternative* to the one we find in Honneth and not one which can be reconciled with the latter's framework.[13] It is, moreover, not one which is applicable to all recognition struggles, notably those which do indeed aim at the form of reconciliation Honneth postulates and which may indeed continue to be usefully analysed using Honneth's theory.

Honneth's main concern, meanwhile, was the need to revitalise the project of Critical Theory. This was necessary, he argued, to provide it with 'transcendent' normative foundations whilst being firmly rooted in particular immanent social conditions.[14] Honneth argues that, in contrast to Adorno's negativism, which tended to rule out our ability to locate an emancipatory interest in the social world, Habermas' concept of communicative understanding can offer us 'a pre-theoretical sphere of emancipation through which critique can ground its normative standpoint within social reality'

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intellectually subversive' (Shaw, 2017). Although Deranty notes in a number of places how different the projects are (for example Deranty 2003: 185), I think Shaw is correct to argue that Deranty and Genel are, in general, approaching Rancière from an overly Honnethian perspective and that there are certain unacknowledged costs – or imprecise nuances – in taking this approach. For example, Deranty's co-editor Genel, identifies Rancièrian politics as exceptional 'revolutionary irruption[s] of equality', against the latter's claims *and* diminishes their importance as normatively less important than gradual institutional change (Genel in RoD 2016: 22-23; Shaw, 2017). This is an interesting parallel with the tendency of deliberative theorists to marginalize the political discourse of the part without a part, which I discussed in chapter one, part two.

[13] It may be objected that I am contributing to the conceptual confusion surrounding the use of the term 'recognition' to which Thompson referred. On the one hand, I could respond that Honneth simply cannot account for recognition struggles entirely within his own terms: that his account is too limited and requires supplementation and/or correction. On the other, I dispute that I am proposing an entirely unrelated concept. As I said, Rancière's 'recognition' is also dynamic, indeed more radically dynamic than in Honneth's theory; it is part of a process, albeit not a teleological one; and it is mutual insofar as the changes to the distribution to the sensible affect the whole community. This reinterprets the three key terms but still means, I suggest, that we can talk about the theories of recognition as related to, although not reducible to, each other.

[14] See introduction for a definition of Frankfurt School Critical Theory.

(Honneth, 2007a: 68). In other words, with communicative understanding we can find a transcendent justificatory principle within our social world. Yet according to Honneth, Habermas fails to link this emancipatory interest with the experiences of agents and therefore cannot fully explain the process through which emancipation occurs (ibid., 70). It was therefore primarily in the attempt to approach a perceived lacuna in Habermas' theory, in order to revitalise the distinctive project of Critical Theory, that Honneth came to theorise recognition (see also Honneth 2002: 513).

This is not to say he therefore offers an inadequate account of recognition; but we should note that recognition, for Honneth, is tied into this larger project. However, here I am concerned with analysing the practice of recognition struggles, rather than the grander project of grounding the normative foundations of Critical Theory, particularly in its distinctive Frankfurt School form. If we accept that Rancière better allows us to conceive of certain struggles for recognition, then this would also have implications for the plausibility of Honneth's wider project, but I am not able to address this issue here.

Part One: Recognition without distortion

For Honneth, all social struggles aim ultimately at the 'acquisition of social recognition' (2007a: 71). He argues it is shown in empirical studies that the motivation behind struggle is the violation of 'intuitive notions of justice' which are 'always constituted by expectations of respect for one's own dignity, honour or integrity' (ibid.).[15] Experiences of perceived disrespect are therefore felt, according to Honneth, to be instances of moral

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[15] Note this is the way he attempted to move beyond Habermas' position: linking emancipatory interest with the moral feelings of subjects.

injustice as subjects do not receive the recognition to which they feel themselves entitled. In other words, one's self-image is not reflected back by the society in which one lives in a way perceived as morally significant.

For Honneth, such a distorted self-image causes suffering since he follows Hegel[16] in:

> tak[ing] it for granted that human beings need the experience of recognition in order to relate to their capabilities and potentials in a way that permits a free, uncoerced realisation of their personality. (Honneth 2002: 514-515)

In other words, the development of our personalities is, for Honneth, necessarily limited under such conditions. This is because one's ability to realise oneself – or expand one's freedom[17] – depends on having one's own view of the self reflected back *objectively*, both in the eyes of others and more widely by societal institutions. We cannot experience ourselves as free 'as long as the preconditions for the implementation of our autonomous aims cannot be found in external reality' (Honneth, 2014: 47). But for Honneth, the conditions for my full self-realisation can only be realised when the conditions exist for the self-realisation of others in society. That is to say, it is through

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[16] Honneth turns to Hegel's early writings because, he argues, by the time he wrote the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 'the consciousness-theoretic architectonics ultimately do prevail over the 'recognition-theoretic' substance' (1995: 58). Honneth thus resolves to go back to the early unfinished insights and develop them into a theory. To do so, however, Honneth drops the stronger metaphysical presuppositions that Hegel is working with, and instead seeks to anchor his claims in empirical social scientific research. He turns to G. W. Mead to give Hegel's theory a 'materialist' rendering. This is possible because, according to Honneth, the young Hegel and Mead agree that one can only develop a practical relation-to-self when one has learnt to view oneself through the eyes of social counterparts.

[17] As Honneth explores in his most recent work *Freedom's Right* (2014), freedom cannot be simply understood as negative freedom (from external constraint) or as 'positive' freedom (to subjectively realise oneself) but as social freedom which suggests the conditions for my own subjective realisation are to be found in the objective 'recognition' of that self in the world around me.

extending relations of *mutual* recognition that further individualisation is possible for both parties – a process which is propelled by our ever-expanding claims of subjectivity. In other words, mutual recognition enables reciprocal self-realisation.

Mutual recognition occurs, for Honneth, in the three separate spheres identified by Hegel. The first form of recognition is acquired through love relations in the family, amongst friends and between lovers. For Honneth, the model for love relations is the parent-child relation. Using the research of Donald Winnicott and Jessica Benjamin, he suggests that all human life starts in symbiosis and that successful recognition is the ability for both 'mother' [18] and child to recognise each other as separate entities. (Honneth, 1995: 98-107). If successful, the child learns to be alone whilst remaining confident that the 'mother's' love will continue. At the same time, she learns to trust her own experience and express her own needs and feelings, despite her physical and emotional vulnerability. The relation-to-self which comes about through these experiences is one of self-confidence. For Honneth, this is conceptually and genetically prior to all other forms of reciprocal recognition. Through love relations we develop the psychological precondition for the development of further attitudes of self-respect (ibid., 107).[19] Honneth argues that experiences such as rape and torture, which threaten the physical integrity of the body, can undermine this basic self-confidence without which experiencing recognition in the other spheres is not possible (ibid., 133).

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[18] Honneth follows object-relations theorists in using the term 'mother' but it should probably be understood as referring to the primary care giver. Nevertheless, sections of the account – in particular the symbiosis felt by the 'mother' – do seem to rely on an account of the biological mother as primary care giver, particularly the view that symbiosis starts during the mother's experiences of pregnancy. Indeed, I follow Allen in suggesting that this account of the experience of symbiosis, at least on the part of the 'mother', is one of the least plausible aspects of the account (Allen, 2010: 24).

[19] Note that love relations are ahistorical, unlike legal relations and solidarity which, for Honneth, could only have developed through history (Honneth 1995: 133).

Presuming that a subject has acquired sufficient self-confidence through satisfactory recognition in significant love relations, one is open to a second form of recognition achieved through the medium of legal relations. By being recognised as a being with rights, subjects acquire the 'possibility of seeing their actions as the universally respected expression of their own autonomy' (ibid., 118). By raising socially acceptable claims, subjects can demonstrate to themselves that they are respected by others and are universally viewed as morally responsible persons. In this sense, subjects see themselves as equal to other citizens insofar as they possess the same dignity. This *public* experience, Honneth argues, allows us to develop a relation-to-self of self-respect (ibid., 120). Experiences of disrespect in this sphere are the result of legal exclusion which can take two forms: a legal restriction of one's personal autonomy and comparative inequality with other citizens (van den Brink, 2011: 167). This prompts recognition struggles which can work in two different ways: either to expand legal rights substantially into more areas or to extend them to more people.

Whilst in legal relations we are recognised as equally autonomous beings, in the third sphere we are recognised in our biographical particularity. We are esteemed for particular characteristics which contribute towards the achievement of societal goals. In this way, according to Honneth, we develop a relation-to-self characterised by self-esteem. If we are denied recognition in this sphere, we experience disrespect in the form of denigration or insult. As Honneth argues, 'the result of the evaluative degradation of certain patterns of self-realisation is that [subjects] cannot relate to their mode of life as something of positive significance within their community' (1995: 134). In other words, Honneth is claiming that we only develop self-esteem when our abilities, ways of life, cultural

belonging and so on are recognised as making a valuable contribution to a shared social and cultural horizon.[20]

It is clear, then, that for Honneth, struggles for recognition lead not only to recognition of existing, unrecognised characteristics, but the development of a practical self-relation through the struggle. There is, then, dynamism in Honneth's model which he has emphasised and reaffirmed in a recent encounter with Rancière:

> the main result of a struggle for recognition [is] mostly a de-identification (or a dis-identification) in the following sense: that, by fighting and trying to reformulate the existing principles of recognition, we are losing the established categories of identification framing our own group, our own personality. In that sense we overcome our fixed identities… (RoD: 109)

As we have seen, our fixed identities are limited in an important way due to the distorted self-relation which prevents further individualisation. For Honneth successful recognition struggles create the conditions for this further development. Yet this presents Honneth with the thorny question of what is being recognised. Does recognition generate the capacities for the first time or merely actualise them? Honneth takes up a middle position in this discussion, arguing that 'the evaluative qualities that subjects already have to 'possess' … would then be conceived of as potentialities that recognitional responses transform into actual capacities' (Honneth, 2002: 510; see also Honneth 2007b: 331-334).[21] It is, in other words, the actualisation of an inherent

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[20] Indeed, it is notable that the spheres are progressive and that individualization does not properly develop until the third, most developed sphere.
[21] Honneth continues: 'in our recognitional attitudes, we respond appropriately to evaluative qualities that, by the standards of our lifeworld, human subjects already

potentiality, although this potentiality is only available to her after the act of recognition. As such, Honneth's position can be seen as an attempt to find a middle way between 'pure constructivism and mere representationalism' (2002: 510). But to make this case, Honneth also argues we require a robust account of progress which allows us to make justified judgements regarding the trans-historical validity of a particular form of recognition (ibid.). That is to say, as we become able to recognise a greater number of qualities in other people, the 'normative level of our relations of recognition rises' in society as a whole, enabling us to attain greater autonomy (Honneth, 2007b: 334).[22]

There are two important points I want to emphasise in relation to this account. Firstly, recognition here represents a human good and misrecognition a harm. Recognition has an 'unambiguously positive character' because it allows the individual to identify with their own qualities and attain a greater degree of self-realisation and autonomy (ibid., 330).[23] Misrecognition, by contrast, necessarily limits such a development. Indeed, Honneth would agree with fellow Hegelian recognition theorist, Charles Taylor, that misrecognition 'can inflict a grievous wound' since 'a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves' (Taylor, 1992: 25).

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possess but are actually available to them only once they can identify with them as a result of experiencing the recognition of these qualities… although we make manifest, in our acts of recognition, only those evaluative qualities that are already present in the relevant individual, it is only as a result of our reactions that he comes to be in a position to be truly autonomous, because he is then able to identify with his capabilities' (Honneth 2002: 510). Interestingly, this actualisation of potentiality has parallels with Rancière's approach, which I discuss further below.

[22] Note this is another place where Honneth requires a strong conception of progress to make his theory work. See Allen's critique of backwards-looking progress in part two below.

[23] In this sense, Honneth seems to follow fellow Hegelian recognition theorist, Charles Taylor, in arguing recognition is 'a vital human need' (Taylor, 1992: 26).

This means that, for Honneth, an account of recognition such as that found in Althusser – whereby individuals are subjected through interpellation[24] – simply does not count as recognition. Recognition, as Honneth understands it, 'consists in a particular act of affirmation of another person or group' which enables further self-realisation (Honneth, 2007b: 330). It is, for Honneth, a moral act, 'determined by the value of other person's … and not one's own intentions' (ibid., 337). An alternative *normalising* picture of recognition, for Honneth, is simply not *mutual*. On this definition, we can distinguish normalising acts from recognition if we experience them as restricting our autonomy (ibid., 339). Yet are there not also normalising acts where groups are recognised in terms which are deemed 'simultaneously positive, credible, and contrastive to a certain degree' by the recognized subjects and therefore not as limits to autonomy? (Ibid., 340, 337-340) We might think, for example, of the affirmation of women as good housewives. Honneth attempts to capture such examples as 'ideological recognition,' although assumes – probably too quickly – that this example does not capture such as case, for the evaluative standard which it utilizes is anachronistic and no longer 'credible' to those involved (ibid., 338-339). He admits it is difficult to distinguish ideological recognition from recognition, at least in the present.[25] Since the participants have good reason to accept these positive, credible and contrastive affirmations, they cannot be simply dismissed as irrational. To identify these cases as irrational and hence ideological, Honneth suggests we take into account the absence of material, institutional conditions for fully realizing the new value (ibid., 346). In this way, Honneth seeks to preserve the inherently 'good' nature of non-ideological recognition.

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[24] For a brief discussion of Althusser's interpellation, see chapter three, part four.

[25] It is easier, Honneth suggests, to identify past acts of ideological recognition which have been discredited by the normative development of society. Here is another instance of Honneth's presumption of a strong concept of progress (Honneth, 2007b: 326-327).

Secondly, for Honneth, we have to posit a telos of an undistorted self-relation – even if we never know what this could look like – in order to explain what goes wrong when one experiences disrespect. As he recently clarified:

> the first experience of an injustice is the experience of a distorted self-relationship. I can't refer to myself sufficiently or completely with the help of the categories that exist in the political social order in which I live. In that sense, self-relationship is – normatively seen – the reference point of the struggles that I'm describing, and in that sense, something like the telos of an undistorted self-relationship is still what should be introduced here…

> I'm presupposing a distinction between incomplete and complete self-relationships. But I agree that we are not able to describe what a complete undistorted self-relationship would ever be… All we have are instances of distorted self-relationships… In my opinion, we simply cannot do without the notion of an undistorted and complete self-relationship, even if there is only ever going to be a negative or indirect access to it. We simply have to posit the ideal of an intact relation to self as counterfactual reference, against which distorted forms of self-relations appear as such. (RoD: 109-110)

Thus whilst it only acts as a 'regulative ideal' (ibid., 109), it is clear that the *telos* of an undistorted self-relation plays a crucial role in providing Honneth's model with its dynamism. It provides the motivation for struggles of recognition to be taken up by acting as the counterfactual against which existing recognition relations appear deficient. It also gives direction to the process, allowing certain forms of self-relation to appear as

more or less deficient depending on the level of moral development. It is clear that Honneth cannot easily abandon his postulation of the telos due to its key role in his theory; it is also clear that he does not wish to do so. Yet this aspect of his thought has provoked criticism from many different directions and it is this concept which I will problematise in the next section, by focusing specifically on what recognition looks like in colonial spaces.

Part Two: Recognition Interrupted

In the third chapter of her important recent work *The End of Progress*,[26] Amy Allen examines Honneth's postulation of a telos of an undistorted self-relation. She describes how, for Honneth, this ideal provides the substantive content to his conception of forward-looking progress. For Allen, forward-looking progress is a moral-political imperative: a normative goal that we are striving to achieve in order to create a good, or at least more just, society, and a necessary element of any theory which considers itself critical or progressive (Allen, 2016: 12).

But what allows us to postulate such an end or telos? According to Honneth, 'the normative goal of societies should consist in the reciprocal enabling of self-realisation, although what favours this goal is grasped as the grounded result of a certain analysis of the process of human development' (Honneth cited in ibid., 82). In other words, as Allen glosses:

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[26] As I discussed briefly in the introduction, in this book Amy Allen offers a critique of the metanormative commitments of recent Frankfurt School thinkers to what she calls a backward-looking account of progress.

what favours the normative goal that animates critical theory – "the reciprocal enabling of self-realisation" – is that it is understood as the result of a developmental process. In this way, Honneth clearly roots the forward looking idea of progress as an imperative in a backward looking story about the process of historical progress or development that has led up to "us" … (Ibid., 82)

This means that Honneth's forward-looking idea of progress – the reciprocal enabling of self-realisation – is justified as a worthy goal on the basis of a backwards-looking account of progress. Allen defines backwards-looking progress as 'progress as a fact,' which is to say those who defend it are committed to the idea that our normative ideals, conception of practical rationality and social and political institutions are the result of a process of social development and historical learning. This means that Honneth's necessary forward-looking account of progress cannot be disentangled from what she calls a backwards-looking account of progress.

But for Allen, the notion of backwards-looking progress is deeply implicated in problematic colonial assumptions which have been highlighted by many postcolonial and de-colonial thinkers. These objections fall into two categories. Firstly, she argues, we have political reasons for rejecting the idea that European modernity is the outcome of a progressive historical development. This is not only it has been used to rationalise and justify colonialism; it also fails to see the extent to which Europe as a distinct identity has been constituted by its others. As such it ignores how 'the very material preconditions for and idea of Europe and European modernity are themselves colonised and racialised' (ibid., 18). Allen therefore argues that the notion of backwards-looking progress is bound up with 'complex relations of domination, exclusion, and silencing colonised and racialised others' (ibid., 19).

The second problem is epistemological. How does one know that one is more developed without a god's-eye view perspective? The 'stadial' reading of history, as postcolonial thinkers such as Bhambra have argued, was developed to explain a pre-made judgement of the inferiority of others, which it is then used to justify in circular fashion (ibid., 20). This assumption, Bhambra claims, is written into much of the conceptual framework of social science and since it frames the basic assumptions, tends to be confirmed. Likewise Allen's worry is that judgments about progress remain 'nothing more than self-congratulatory defences of the status quo' (ibid., 22). If this critique is successful, it gives us good reason to reject Honneth's postulated telos due to its inherent imbrication in misguided colonial presumptions.

Honneth's response is that such a critique of backwards-looking progress is contradictory. He argues that, as participants in progressive political struggles, we have no choice but to see the developmental process that precedes us as the 'gradual achievement of something better' (Honneth cited in ibid., 85). Progress, for Honneth, is therefore 'irreducible' [*unhintergehbar*] (2009: 1-18) or, in Allen's translation 'ineliminable' (Allen 2016: 82 n6). He writes:

> all those who actively side with the moral achievements of the Enlightenment are thus forced to see the history preceding them as a conflict-ridden learning process, which, as heirs of this process, they have to continue in their own time. (Honneth cited in Allen 2016: 89)

For example, if we are in favour of gay marriage, we are – for Honneth – committed to the idea that it represents a form of progress.

But for Allen, all that we are committed to is the idea that it is the best of available alternatives: not that it constitutes progress. Whilst it might commit us to a forward-looking conception of progress, she suggests:

> it does not follow that we are committed to holding that whichever option we favour among the available alternatives would in fact constitute progress over the status quo; nor does it follow that we are committed to a backward-looking claim about how the present state of affairs is normatively superior to historically antecedent ideals of values. (Ibid., 97)

Indeed, viewing gay marriage as progress is potentially problematic insofar as it is both heteronormative – privileging a bourgeois-romantic conception of heterosexual marriage – and homonormative in that it privileges queer relationships which most closely approximate this heterosexual norm (ibid., 100). An even stronger critique is made by Jasbir Puar, who points to the intertwinement of toleration of particular gay and lesbian subjects (particularly homonormative, white, middle-class subjects) with the agenda of aggressive nationalism and US imperialism. According to Puar, there has been an 'historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states' at the expense of other, more 'deviant' sexual minorities. This inclusion is then used as a justification for considering the West as culturally superior to nations which do not tolerate homosexuality (Puar, 2017: 239; Allen, 2016: 102). Puar calls this constellation 'homonationalism.' For Puar, the 'ugliness' of homonationalism lies in 'its bifocal capacity in one instance to attach and entrench bodies even more deeply to the disciplinary force of sexuality through its offerings … and yet still enact a convincing yet brutal liberalism against Others in the very name of

this attachment' (Puar, 2017: 230). If, as Puar suggests, the toleration of gay marriage is *inherently* tied up with this double project – normalising and disciplining 'queer bodies' on the one hand and pursuing aggressive, neo-imperial foreign policies on the other – then it is far harder to see the legalisation of gay marriage as constituting an instance of backwards-looking progress in any clear-cut sense.

Of course, the worry is that this critique, despite its progressive intent, could have deeply illiberal consequences. As Davenport wrote in a review of Allen's book, 'it sounds like something right out of Putin's playbook' (Davenport). But Allen's point is not that we should be deprived of resources to criticise homophobic policies. It does not mean that we cannot think nations who discriminate against homosexuals are *wrong*: simply that we cannot argue that they are *backward*. The difference, for Allen, is that we treat those we consider wrong as moral contemporaries with whom a dialogue can be pursued and from whom we can learn (Allen, 2016: 103). She follows Saba Mahmood in suggesting we need a stance of epistemic or metanormative humility (ibid., 74-77). Mahmood proposes:

> a mode of encountering the Other which does not assume that in the process of culturally translating other lifeworlds one's own certainty about how the world should proceed can remain stable. This attitude requires the virtue of humility: a sense that one does not always know *what* one opposes and that a political vision at times has to admit its own finitude in order to even comprehend what it has sought to oppose. (Mahmood, 2012: 199)

Mahmood's proposal is based on her study of the Egyptian women's Islamic pietist movement – a movement whose practices she initially approached as 'objectionable, to put it mildly' – but found that, over time, the Western ideals of freedom, equality and

autonomy which she 'held so dear' could not be used to judge the lives of those she studied (ibid., 198). She argued it was only by 'dwelling in the modes of reasoning endemic to a tradition that I once judged abhorrent, by immersing myself within the thick texture of its sensibilities and attachments, that I have been able to dislocate the certitude of my own projections and even begin to comprehend why Islamism, at least in one of its rendition, exerts such a force in people's lives.' (ibid., 199). Given the enormous difficulty of approaching the question of women is Islam in any 'open sense' – with the extreme emotions to which this issue gives rise and the long history of entanglement with colonial projects[27] – one suspects that advocating this stance of humility is not the 'platitude' or 'idealist bromide' that Vázquez-Arroyo accuses Allen's conclusion of falling into (2017: S226).[28]

At the very least, then, the example of gay marriage shows that we are *not committed* – Allen's key term in these pages – to seeing options we favour in the present as examples of progress. Thus it is not contradictory, as Honneth claims, to take a 'progressive' stance on political events and deny that this represents 'progress as a fact'. Indeed, Puar's critique suggests not only why we might not need to commit to a view of backwards-looking progress, but exemplifies a case where we *might not wish to*. But even if we accept that endorsing gay marriage as progress under conditions of homonationalism is wrongheaded, are other struggles necessarily so problematically 'entangled?' For instance, should the decriminalisation of homosexuality not be seen as an example of backwards-looking progress; or, in a different context, the increasing number of rights women have

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[27] See also footnote 38 in chapter two below.
[28] For more on Vázquez-Arroyo's critique of Allen, see discussion in the first section of the introduction.

been granted over the past century?[29] That is to say: even if this example fails as an instance of progress, and even if we are not *necessarily* committed to a view of progress when we endorse one alternative amongst others, does this mean we should entirely reject the notion of backwards-looking progress outright, in all cases?

Allen's position becomes even more difficult to maintain when we examine her assumption that, *in general*, postcolonial and decolonial critics reject the notion of progress. As discussed briefly in the introduction, Vázquez-Arroyo argues that this is only defensible if one understands postcolonial theory in its limited, mainstream variety, associated with thinkers such as Said, Spivak or theorists of the 'colonial matrix of power.' Yet if one critically examines the contested nature of the field, one finds a variety of positions taken towards the notion of progress including many who defend it (Vázquez-Arroyo, 2017: S225). Significantly, Allen gives no reason for preferring one school of postcolonial thought over these others available. If one alternatively followed a different 'branch' of postcolonial theory, 'decolonising' Critical Theory might not entail the rejection of all forms of backwards-looking progress but instead a careful engagement with a concept which has often been embroiled in colonial assumptions.[30]

I suggest, therefore, that although Allen demonstrates the imbrication of Honneth's telos of an undistorted self-relation – and his wider critical project – with a backwards-looking

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[29] Note that these examples are not uncontroversial. See, for example, Wendy Brown disputes the assumption made by many feminists that greater state protection for women has liberating consequences. She explores the masculinist nature of state power and argues feminists should be wary of seeking 'protection' from the same source – masculine power – as the one women fear. This is because, in liberating women from masculine power located in the "private" sphere, the masculine power of the state is then free to colonise and administer them. This means, Brown argues, that feminists cannot presume the state and state legislation able to liberate for women from masculine power (Brown, 1995: 166-196).

[30] This might be more along the lines of McCarthy's project, see introduction.

account of progress, this is not yet sufficient reason to reject it outright. More would need to be said in order to demonstrate the *inherently* problematic nature of this concept. Nevertheless, it should give us pause for thought. Honneth certainly embraces a strong concept of progress, one which I have suggested is not 'ineliminable' and has been subject to intense – if not conclusive – critique. In relation to his broader project we might want to question whether we are willing to commit to the strong conception of progress his form of Critical Theory requires; or whether there might not be alternative critical approaches which might serve us better. It might also give us the first indication that the telos he postulates might be difficult to reconcile with recognition struggles taking place particularly but not only in colonial spaces.[31]

What I want to question further here is not the backward-looking view of progress underpinning Honneth's telos, but the telos of an undistorted self-relation as a forward-looking view of progress: as an ideal to which we are headed. This is not to argue against the idea of forward-looking progress. Like Allen, I take the possibility of progress to be necessary in order to conceive of emancipatory politics at all. But I want to examine the limitations of this particular ideal, particularly when viewed from colonial spaces. Do we need to posit a fully undistorted self-relation – even as an unrealisable ideal – in order to understand what motivates struggles for recognition? Should we even see it as an ideal?

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[31] Note that Rancière also questions Honneth's interlinking of recognition with an account of progress. He describes Honneth's 'courageous and militant assertion' of our need for faith in progress (RoD: 92). There is a certain respect in Rancière's tone here for Honneth's atypical – we might say almost *untimely* – move against the grain: the type of gesture we have come to expect from Rancière himself. Nevertheless, he too rejects (his interpretation of) Honneth's conclusion that there is 'some kind of motor of history. From my point of view, there is no motor of history: history does nothing' (ibid., 94-95). Like Allen, he rejects postulating both a telos of an undistorted self-identity and the idea of progress, though for different reasons which I examine below. Nevertheless, Rancière can be argued to also work with a conception of backwards-looking progress, but one which is much weaker than Honneth's, focusing on egalitarian inscriptions. On egalitarian inscriptions, see part three below.

What would the fulfilment of this ideal look like, particularly in the colonial context? And what might we *lose* in achieving an undistorted self-relation?

To examine these questions, I consider Audra Simpson's recent book, *Mohawk Interruptus* which investigates what she calls the 'politics of refusal' as enacted by the Native American people from which she comes, the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke. The politics of refusal, Simpson suggests, rejects many practices of recognition. For instance, individuals might refuse to travel under Canadian or American passports – the 'gifts' of citizenship – often at great personal inconvenience since they reject the sovereignty of the Canadian and American states.[32] This is because, as Simpson explores, the Mohawks are not struggling primarily for recognition of their culture, but for sovereignty and their land. Yet sovereignty and nationhood:

> is to say the least an uneasy fit within a state that wishes to be singular, even when it imagines itself "federalist." Precontact nations are not "confederateable," as settlement requires a new political tableau or one made of parts that can be assimilated. (Simpson, 2014: 159)

It seems, then, that claims to indigenous sovereignty are extremely difficult for settler states to recognise. Nevertheless, as Simpson argues, a 'politics of recognition' has become *a* if not *the* primary mechanism for dealing with indigenous peoples, specifically in Canada but in settler states more widely. This may seem surprising but for the fact that, in such contexts, Simpson argues, a liberal 'politics of recognition' functions primarily as a normalising, biopolitical management technique (ibid., 21). This technique

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[32] Traditional Kahnawà:ke lands extend from New York State to Southern Quebec thus crossing the border between Canada and America. This makes the border a regular – if not daily – inconvenience for Mohawks who refuse Canadian and American passports.

works to 'sustain dispossession and occupation' in a state which is, she argues, premised on the elimination – whether through violence or assimilation – of indigenous peoples (ibid.). By being recognised as Canadian or American and accepting the accompanying 'gifts', there is an implicit:

> acceptance of the dispossession of your lands, of internalising and believing the things that have been taught about you: that you are a savage, that your language is incoherent, that you are less than white people, not quite up to par, that you are then "different," with a different culture that is defined by others and will be according a protected space of legal recognition if your group evidences that "difference" in terms that are sufficient to the settlers' legal eye. (Ibid., 22)

Here, the terms of recognition are defined by the settler state and recognition requires indigenous people to reject their own 'sovereignty' and the permanent dispossession of their lands. Meaningful recognition of indigenous sovereignty is, on such a picture, impossible.

In other words, these theorists criticise 'liberal recognition' because it requires *reconciliation on the terms of the coloniser*. Following Fanon, Glenn Coulthard suggests that the exchanges of recognition from the coloniser to the colonised 'usually end up being structurally determined by and in the interests of the coloniser' (2014: 152). It aims at:

> reconciling Indigenous peoples' assertions of nationhood with settler-state sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identity-related claims through the negotiation of settlements over issues such as land, economic development, and self-government… [T]his orientation to the reconciliation of Indigenous

nationhood with state sovereignty is still *colonial* insofar as it remains structurally committed to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of our lands and self-determining authority. (Ibid., 151)

Moreover, for Coulthard, reconciliation tends to involve recognition of and retribution for past injustices – apologies, compensation and so on – but ignoring the continuing structural injustice which persist in what he still considers a colonial context. It is presumed that historical wrongs can be 'righted' without further state transformation being required (ibid., 165). This has led Coulthard to suggest that colonisation, in the form of colonial governance, continues today precisely through a liberal politics of recognition (ibid., 25).

Nevertheless, it is not clear that this example troubles Honneth's picture. Such a form of recognition is neither dynamic, nor mutual. Indeed Coulthard recognises that the reproduction of colonial rule 'rests on the ability to entice Indigenous peoples to *identify*, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly *asymmetrical* and *nonreciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the settler state and society' (ibid.). It is recognition as bestowed by a powerful state upon subordinate groups whose subordination is thereby reified. One does not overcome a particular form of distorted self-relation since either the distortion continues after recognition has occurred or important parts of an identity are given up. As we saw above, such a picture simply does not count as recognition for Honneth. If a politics of refusal rejects this form of 'liberal recognition,' then it need not reject Honnethian recognition. In fact, rejecting 'liberal recognition' might well be the precondition for a struggle for mutual, dynamic recognition.

Yet whilst these uses of the term 'recognition' are different, I suggest that Simpson's and Coulthard's work still raises troubling questions for Honneth's picture, both more broadly and specifically for the postulation of a telos of reciprocal self-realisation. In particular, they press on a form of reconciliation which, whilst different to 'liberal recognition,' is still presupposed by Honneth's account. Coulthard does not discuss Honneth directly, but he argues that Nancy Fraser's work is liable to such a critique since it rests on the problematic assumption that the liberal setter state constitutes a legitimate framework within which recognition claims can be made.[33] This fails to recognise two of the key claims made during indigenous struggles: the legitimacy of the settler state over indigenous people and their lands; and the normative status of the state-form as an appropriate mode of governance (ibid., 36). Other writers have accused Honneth of a similar conservatism. For example, as Balaton-Chrimes and Stead argue, directly in relation to Honneth, he makes problematic:

> assumptions of the possibility of adequate recognition relationships immanent to existing political communities … Recognition has thus become a powerful norm through which alterity can be managed in ways that err on the side of inclusion in, rather than disruption of, existing political and intersubjective arrangements… (2017: 6-7)

If Honneth cannot adequately account for the radical transformation of institutional – specifically state – structures, as well as intersubjective arrangements, through the

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[33] Indeed, the title of Audra Simpson's book, *Mohawk Interruptus* clearly references Nancy Fraser's work *Justice Interruptus* and on one level, signals an interruption to the politics of recognition. The book lays out a challenge to the idea that justice here requires participatory parity, since participatory parity seems to presuppose the body within which one is to participate. I discuss two further interpretations of Mohawk interruptions below.

dynamics of recognition, then his account of recognition will also be problematically limited.

I suggest that we can see how reconciliation is a problem for Honneth by considering his claims in light of Simpson's discussion of membership. How is membership of indigenous groups to be decided in a context not only of intense colonial disruption to traditional structures but where sovereignty itself is disputed?[34] One hundred and fifty years of settler colonial law have definitively *interrupted* previous patterns of group identification.[35] The traditional matriarchal structure was turned into a patriarchal one by the Indian Act of 1850 (and accepted by the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke in 1890). This meant that descent no longer ran through the women but rather through the male line, with consequences for women 'marrying out.' They and their children no longer had the right to membership and its benefits. In 1985, this was successfully challenged in the courts by excluded women, who were then put back on the Federal Registration Lists of Indians in Canada. It was then up to each reserve to admit or deny membership to these women and children in their own local registries (Simpson, 2014: 56). But many indigenous people perceived this ruling as illegitimate: as Canada imposing yet again on their sovereignty and daring to tell them who belonged. Many groups resisted implementation of these measures – and continued to restrict membership to these

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[34] Povinelli (2002) examined a similar issue in her book, *The Cunning of Recognition*. For Povinelli, to claim rights to their land, Aborigines in Australia are required to make an impossible 'authentic identification' with a pre-colonial society which has been thoroughly disrupted by two hundred years of colonialism. At the same time, to be acceptable, their practices must not deviate substantially from the form of morality of the present-day liberal state.

[35] Note this is another meaning of the title, *Mohawk Interruptus*. Simpson discusses the way the Mohawks and their land have been interrupted by the settler state perhaps best exemplified by the US-Canada border which runs through their land. At the same time, the Mohawks continue themselves to interrupt those settler states through their continued presence – their failure to be eliminated – and their politics of refusal. It is this third meaning on which I will focus in the rest of the chapter.

women[36] – which caused intense controversy both inside and outside the community.[37] In contrast to these legal measures, Simpson argues, citizenship is very often understood within the community affectively. People are *felt* to belong, due to their personal histories, and Simpson discovered during her fieldwork that this is an important form of recognition for the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke (ibid., 175). Crucially, these two forms of recognition – premised upon two different forms of sovereignty – are sometimes in tension. For women who wish to return to the community having married out, and who seek state recognition of their claims to live on the reservation, seeking legal recognition can result in a diminished recognition of affective citizenship on the part of the community (ibid., 190).[38]

We might think that this example demonstrates the impossibility of two forms of sovereignty existing simultaneously, side by side. For Simpson, however, we can imagine sovereignty nested within another sovereignty. She suggests:

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[36] Ironically, this exclusion was made *on the basis of a colonial law.* Although Simpson clearly disagrees with this reaction, she is sympathetic to it insofar as it cannot be understood outside of the context of land expropriation and the elimination of indigenous peoples. She argues this reaction must be understood in the context of protecting and sharing out what little remains. Restricting membership to women who marry out is also understandable insofar as white males have historically been seen as a far greater threat to further land expropriation than white females.

[37] Indeed, it was trying to understand this deeply illiberal response that was the initial motivation behind Simpson's fieldwork. Again, comparisons can be made with Povinelli's (2002) work according to which indigenous cultures must be sufficiently authentic yet, at the same time, sufficiently similar to liberal moral norms in order to be recognised.

[38] This issue is often framed in terms of the liberal state 'saving' indigenous women from their own communities. But is this just another example of 'white men saving brown women from brown men' to paraphrase Spivak? (Spivak, 2010: 268) As many thinkers have noted, this theme has a very long history in the justification of colonialism. As Saba Mahmood writes, 'A long history of colonialism has of course helped secure this essential framing: colonialism rationalised itself on the basis of the "inferiority" of non-Western cultures, most manifest in their patriarchal customs and practices, from which indigenous women had to be rescued through the agency of colonial rule' (Mahmood, 2012: 189-190).

One does not entirely negate the other, but they necessarily stand in terrific tension and pose serious jurisdictional and normative challenges to each other: Whose citizen are you? What authority do you answer to? One challenges the very legitimacy of the other. (Ibid., 10)

Recognition of alternative, multiple sovereignties, on this picture, is not impossible but necessarily produces enormous tensions and *inevitable distortions*.

This example therefore challenges the presumptions underlying the ideal of an undistorted self-identity. Specifically, it challenges the presumption that recognition is always a good and misrecognition always harmful. Acquiring legal recognition – Honneth's second sphere in which we acquire self-respect – did not lead to a less distorted self-relationship and greater potential for self-realisation but rather the opposite. We have an example of the *harm* of recognition – which is neither misrecognition nor ideological recognition. Rather, legal recognition itself is not necessarily a good if it can conflict with other important forms of recognition. If we want to say this is only a temporary adjustment – in the difficult transition before the Mohawks 'catch up' with the liberal state – then we are clearly back in a reconciliatory picture.

But this case also points towards a problem with the ideal in the opposite direction. Not only is recognition not always a good, but misrecognition or non-recognition is not always a harm. In contrast to reconciliatory accounts of recognition, Simpson and Coulthard attempt to make way for alternative forms of recognition. Simpson is interested in forms of citizenship which allow indigenous people to sustain resistance to the state in order to maintain claims which are incompatible with that state: 'the ways in

which alternative, Indigenous citizenships may move polities away from … these seductive inducements to perform for the state…' (2014: 159). She moves, in short, away from '"top down," or statist forms of recognition' to 'the grounded forms of recognition that produce the authoritative nexus within the community that make, refuse, create, endure, withhold, or in various other ways *affect* the will of others' (ibid., 158-159). Coulthard, too, argues for forms of cultural self-recognition which are not only temporary – as we find in Fanon's advocation of negritude as a stage in the decolonisation struggle – but how critically revitalised traditions might also reconstruct decolonised indigenous nations (2014: 148). But pursuing this path means that a *distorted* self-identity vis-à-vis the wider society is inevitable: and that an undistorted self-identity cannot even be seen as an ideal. In other words, although a politics of refusal might not reject recognition outright, it not only accepts *some* distortion but seems to require it.[39]

Indeed, other theorists working in the recognition tradition have noted that, within an inherently pluralistic world – and particularly within certain historical contexts – aiming at a *telos* of an undistorted self-relation appears unachievable, at least for certain groups; or rather, that were it to be achieved, it would require too much adaption from one side and result in the loss of certain valuable traits. If we think that a person's identity can only be thought within the frame of adequate sound intersubjective relations of recognition, this presupposes a 'world characterised by *sound* relationships of recognition' rather than a 'social world that is and always will be full of both *sound* and *unsound* relationships' (van den Brink, 2011: 168-169). In such a context, van den Brink argues, 'suffering from misrecognition of one's concrete traits and abilities is sometimes an

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[39] Note that this account also provides problems for the Rancièrian alternative form of recognition I propose. Specifically, it seems to conflict with his account of disidentification with social identities. I attempt a possible reconciliation of these positions in the final section.

unavoidable and irreparable cost of standing up for one's ideas about what is valuable in life' (ibid., 165).

This is to take seriously the constitutive importance of struggle in the formation of identity in daily life. This might seem to miss the point: Honneth, of course, has written about struggles for recognition through which identity develops. But the way in which this struggle is envisioned, as well as its projected ideal end point, seems to undermine the value of – or misjudge the continued importance of – struggle in identity formation. For Honneth, as we have seen, the focus is on the conditions for further self-realisation which come about after a successful struggle. It is therefore not the struggle *per se* but primarily its outcome which is determinate. Indeed, van den Brink suggests that Honneth tends to presuppose that '*we can acquire a firm personal identity without having experienced disrespect*' (ibid., 169, emphasis in original).[40] Interestingly this stands in contrast to other claims made by Honneth that recognition in love relations requires struggle on the part of the child and the mother and it is through struggle itself that individualisation occurs. Yet although Honneth accepts here that the struggle itself, and not simply the conditions it brings about, has positive effects on self-identity, this insight is not always sustained throughout his work. Honneth's second assumption, according to van den Brink, is that 'experiences of disrespect must *by definition* have devastating effects on already acquired

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[40] This analysis is based on the quotation: '[t]he successful integration of physical and emotional qualities of behavior is, as it were, *subsequently* broken up from the outside, thus lastingly destroying … one's underlying trust in oneself' (cited in van den Brink, 2011: 169 emphasis added by van den Brink) The use of the word 'subsequently' suggests, for van den Brink, that Honneth thinks in terms of '*already acquired* aspects of personal identity through sound recognition and their *subsequent* destruction 'from outside' sound relationships of recognition' (ibid.).

personal identity' (ibid.).[41] By contrast, I am suggesting here that there can be a certain value in misrecognition for our very self-realisation.

This means that, if we think that struggle is constitutively important for us, we have to question the ideal status of an undistorted self-identity. Indeed, if we accept that the social world will always be plural and conflicted – which is particularly evident in the colonial settler state we have been examining – and that subjects can never fully control the intersubjective relationships in which they stand,[42] then an undistorted self-relation would not only be impossible, but could not even function as an ideal. This is because such an ideal would prevent resilience to that world from developing. As van den Brink suggests:

> the lack of full recognition seems to me a condition rather than a hindrance for a flourishing personal identity in a pluralistic environment. In a pluralistic world, we make ourselves needlessly vulnerable to the impossibility of social harmony if we conceive of ethical life as presupposing undistorted and unrestricted relationships of recognition.' (Ibid., 172)

Thus if we take the *struggle* for recognition – rather than the reconciled outcome – more seriously than we find at least in important parts of Honneth's work, we have good reasons to reject positing a fully reconciled self even as an ideal.[43]

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[41] This is based on Honneth's assertion that evaluative degradation 'robs the subjects in question of *every opportunity* to attribute social value to their own abilities' (van den Brink, 2011: 169).

[42] Compare with Markell's (2003) claim that striving for recognition may *create* subordinate relationships. See the brief overview at the beginning of this chapter.

[43] This also problematizes the motivating role of the telos. If we do not necessarily suffer from misrecognition, and if we suffer from recognition, then it is not clear that we can postulate a 'telos of an undistorted self-relation' in order to explain why struggles get off

Indeed, the reconciliatory nature of Honneth's work has been noted by other thinkers. Deranty, for example, notes that the stages of recognition in Honneth resemble 'a progressive ascent where the negative serves to reveal the necessary but temporary passage towards more elevated degrees of intersubjective integration' (Deranty, 2003b: 190, own translation).[44] It ends in a reconciliation of the subject with others and also with herself when all aspects of her identity are fixed and recognised since mutuality has been accomplished. For Deranty, this fails to recognise the power of the negative in the Hegelian dialectic. Honneth's vision 'passes too quickly over the tragic, the non-reconciled, the unresolved alienation which everywhere menaces each of the forms of recognition and intersubjective reconciliation in Hegel' (ibid., 191, own translation).[45] This means, for Deranty, that the moment of conflict is not adequately integrated into the thinking of the social: it is rather present as a transitory phenomenon leading to forms of superior reconciliation without itself structuring the social field (ibid., 192).[46]

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the ground. Honneth accuses Rancière of not offering a satisfactory answer to this question, although it seems that he cannot do so either. For Rancière, it is a question of possibility. He denies this commits him to a philosophical anthropology – a 'desire for equality' although it is therefore difficult to explain why people take up the opportunities they do. For Rancière, it is simply a fact that people do so and that this is not 'always' a question of suffering. As Rancière says, 'it's not *only* a question of suffering' (RoD 122-123, *emphasis added*). Similarly, a few pages later he argues: 'It's *not necessarily* because people are suffering that they act politically' (ibid., 126, *emphasis added*). Whether this commits him to a form of philosophical anthropology – to presuming a desire for equality – is a point of tension between Rancière and Honneth (ibid., 120-129). An alternative answer might perhaps be provided by the motivational force of a particular community – as Simpson and Coulthard advocate – which as I suggest in the final section might perhaps be reconciled with Rancière's work by conceiving a 'turning towards' a political subject as an exemplar around which identification can take place.

[44] '*La logique de la reconnaissance semble être celle d'une montée progressive où le négatif sert de révélateur et de passage nécessaire mais temporaire vers des degrés toujours plus élevés d'intégration intersubjective.*'

[45] '*passe trop vite sur le tragique, le non-réconcilié, l'aliénation non résolue qui partout menace chacune des formes de reconnaissance et de réconciliation intersubjective chez Hegel.*'

[46] For Deranty, this is Rancière's most important potential contribution to the ethics of recognition: an understanding of the 'otherness at the heart of identity' (Deranty 2003a: 151).

Against this picture of reconciliation, Coulthard and Simpson aim primarily at examining alternative forms of recognition which create resilience and sustain acts of refusal. Here, however, I want to examine a different form of what I am, for the time being, only tentatively calling 'recognition.' This builds on an understanding of *Mohawk Interruptus* as entailing the way in which the appearance of the Mohawk interrupts the settler state. As I indicated briefly in the introduction, we can see numerous examples of such interruptions in Simpson's work. For instance, she tells the story of her own encounter with a border guard who questions her status card at the border, but whose tone changes abruptly upon discovering Simpson was born in Brooklyn. At that point, the border guard asserts: 'You are an American.' When Simpson insists in response, 'I am a Mohawk,' as I will argue below, the former is not simply making an identity claim: she is interrupting the understanding of sovereignty in the American nation state (Simpson, 2014: 119). She is refusing to be categorised through the lens of nation state sovereignty, but not in a way which glorifies impasse for its own sake. Ideally, she is seeking to reduce the 'bullshit' she experiences at the border: the way the border interrupts her life.

Similarly, during the so-called 'crisis of Oka' – when Mohawk land was to be expropriated to extend a golf course, the people responded with a seventy-eight day armed resistance in defence of their lands. This resistance was not aimed at liberal reconciliation:

> [W]ere they to recognise this [state] authority, it would induce competing obligations to perform their Indigeneity in ways that are politically effective, convincing, and pleasing, inducing a public sympathy for their "plight," which they would not, as we saw with Oka, perform. The state did not want Indians to

remember, let alone act upon, other political traditions and authorities, to pick up weapons, to stand ground on their ground. This was not the "culture" that multiculturalism sought to preserve and protect. (Ibid., 159)

Instead, the then Prime Minister refused to accept that the assembled warriors were a traditional indigenous society, but instead only terrorists and criminals, and some of them were 'not even Canadian' (ibid., 148). Of course, for the indigenous people, this last criticism was indeed the point but the fact it was publicly used to criticise them shows the difficulty of hearing their claims. Yet whilst this was a politics of refusal, it was ultimately a refusal the state was supposed to hear *in the Mohawk's own terms*. Indeed, they *needed to be heard to contest further expropriation of their land*. As such, recognition of their claims was sought from the state, but this form of recognition required a radical change in how the dominant perceived the world. Thus whilst these interruptions and refusals are not aiming at receiving recognition in either a normalising or, I have suggested, a fully reconciliatory sense, I want to suggest they are aiming to impact the world in a way that we may still meaningfully call 'recognition.'

So to be clear, I am not rejecting the idea of recognition outright. Even critics argue there are many instances where groups demand that justice requires recognition. We have also seen that alternative forms of recognition may be necessary, even if state recognition politics are rejected. Moreover, as I have argued, the point of a politics of refusal is not a permanent disengagement. These political actors do not want to be fully reconciled to the state, but they still want their actions to have consequences. They want life at the border – where the Mohawk is interrupted rather than the interrupter – to be improved. They wanted to prevent further expropriation of their lands and the ability to define their own membership. Their struggles in these instances need to be seen and, to have an

effect, they need to be *recognised* in some way. As such, they can be seen as struggles for recognition. Yet these struggles cannot be well conceptualised using Honneth's model, due to its ideal conceptualisation of ever-greater reconciliation. To understand recognition struggles which take this form, I suggest we need not dismiss the importance of struggles for recognition, but rather understand their logic differently. In the next section, I will argue that Rancière's theory of dissensus and disagreement – his aesthetic account of emancipation – allows us to understand 'struggles for recognition' in this sense: where political struggles are aimed precisely at interrupting the status quo.

Part Three: Rancière as Recognition Theorist?

In a recent encounter with Honneth, Rancière constructs what he describes as 'a kind of Rancièrian conception of the theory of recognition' (RoD: 95). He begins by distinguishing three ways in which the term recognition can be used. Usually, recognition is predicated on a substantive identity. In this way it can either refer to a situation where our perceptions coincide with a 'knowledge' we already possess, or to a moral situation where we respect a person as a given sort of entity that demands a certain treatment. In both cases, as Rancière argues, the 're-' of recognition is vital insofar as we already possess the categories into which particular people are 're-cognised'. However, Rancière then identifies a third meaning of recognition, what he calls the 'philosophical concept of recognition.' Here, the focus is on the:

> conditions behind such a confirmation; it focuses on the configuration of the
> field in which things, persons, situations, and argument can be identified. It is not
> the confirmation of something already existing but the construction of the

common world in which existences appear and are validated. In this case, recognition comes first… What exactly happens in my perceptual world and in my capacity to make sense with the sounds being issued by that mouth? (Ibid., 85)

In this passage, Rancière has defined the conditions for recognition in the same terms as a 'distribution of the sensible.'[47] If we understand recognition in this third sense, then a struggle for recognition can be understood as a struggle to change the conditions through which 're'-cognition in the first two senses takes place. In other words, it becomes possible to talk of Rancièrian politics and disagreement – as examined in chapter one – as a *struggle for recognition*.[48] I will examine firstly what this political action looks like and how it avoids the problematic tendency towards reconciliation, caused by the postulation of the telos of an undistorted self-relation, which I identified in Honneth's model. I then turn to the thorny issue of how we might plausibly call this process 'recognition.'

Disagreement, as we have seen, is defined by the appearance of a political subject for which three conditions are necessary. To recap briefly: firstly, a subject cannot simply speak and be taken for doing so. Her words precisely do not make sense in the current distribution. Thus, in some sense, she must build a stage on which to be heard. Secondly, and in order to do so, a subject dis-identifies with her given social role and takes on a precarious political subjectivity. Thirdly, Rancière argues one acts on the presupposition

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[47] See introduction and chapter one, part two.

[48] Rancière accepts that Honneth is also concerned with this third type of recognition, but he worries that Honneth's concept of recognition is in danger of letting the first two common usages of recognition (where the "re" is crucial) limit the potential of a struggle for recognition. This is due to the perceived limits of dynamism in Honneth's model, due to its tendency towards reconciliation.

of equality. As I argued in chapter one, this understanding of the political subject as the 'part without a part' allows one to envisage how one breaks out of the current 'distribution' through which their identity is categorised.

Nevertheless, this does not mean they do not have any social identity or any social role at all. In most cases, they are already recognised in a certain way. For example, women might be respected as mothers, housewives, educators of children and so on. As we saw in chapter one, Gauny was recognised as a worker. But, in Rancière's terms, and note he is still appropriating Honneth's language here:

> this respect was precisely the flipside of a form of disrespect … since they were recognised in this specific aspect, they were not in all other respects. So the respect of an identity may in fact signify a statement of incapacity.' (Ibid., 91)

The political moment consists precisely in actively demonstrating an aspect or a capacity they were not recognised to have. We saw Gauny's 'disinterested' gaze disconnect from his bodily habitus and demonstrate both aesthetic contemplation and the ability to *write*, normally reserved for other, leisured classes. But this raises important questions. In what sense did Gauny not possess these 'capacities' which he went on to demonstrate? Were they unrecognised but existing capacities: was he simply misrecognised? Or, as in Honneth's model examined above, were these potentialities that were actualised as a result of the change in conditions which the struggle brought about?

This also prompts us to ask how Rancière's disagreement is distinguished from Honneth's account of recognition. Because, of course – and as Rancière acknowledges – in Honneth's model too the self undergoes change through the process of struggle.

Social struggles aim at contesting and developing identities, not simply at recognising existing traits. Even in the sphere of love relations, Honneth's Winnicottian model shows how the baby develops herself, for example through the use of the transitional object (ibid., 89). The important point is that, for both Honneth and Rancière, the self and the other are not recognised as they 'are' but rather develop or are constituted through the struggle itself. How then is Rancière's political subject distinguished from Honneth's? Specifically how does he avoid the problems raised in the second section above and how does he do so in a way which is plausible?

The primary difference between the theorists can be located in the way they conceive of the direction of change. We must recall that, for Honneth, the motivation for, and direction of, recognition struggles are provided by a specific disrespect caused to one's self-relation. In other words, there is a distortion between the way I view myself and the way the world view me which causes moral outrage and prompts me to struggle. The direction of the creative, dynamic process of struggle is then, for Honneth, provided by the postulation of an ideal telos of undistorted self-integrity. I aim to overcome this disjunction between world and self: moving towards a more integrated self-relation, even if I can never reach it. It was this telos which I rejected in the second section above.

Rancière also explicitly rejects such a telos. For Rancière, Gauny is not seeking to overcome the way he is disrespected by the world or demonstrating his 'true,' misrecognised capacity as a worker. Rather, he suggests, the 'capacity' the political subject demonstrates is not a capacity specific to a particular identity: the unrecognised capacity of, say, a teacher, a woman or a worker. He argues that the dynamic for change comes 'from the enactment of this capacity which is beyond all specific capacities' (ibid., 93). In another formulation, the political subject, for Rancière, acts in the 'capacity of

anyone' under the 'name of anyone' (ibid., 124). I suggest it is important to separate these two formulations, which are often run together in the same breath, in order to understand what is at stake.

To act in the capacity of anyone is, I will argue, to act on what Rancière calls one's 'equal intelligence.' This is another formulation Rancière uses for presupposing equality. I defend an account of equality as equal intelligence in the first part of chapter three, and therefore defer detailed discussion of this central and problematic concept until then. But very briefly, using one's 'equal intelligence' is to use a common force, which we presume all to possess, to understand and make oneself understood, as sharers in a common language, right here and now.[49] This means that in *disagreeing* – forcing ourselves to be understood – we are using the 'capacity of anyone:' a universal force that Rancière argues everyone can be taken to possess.

Whilst this formulation will remain inadequately explained and defended until chapter three, I suggest it can already allow us to see, provisionally, the difference from Honneth's model. One acts not because of a specific disrespect caused to one's self-relation but on the presupposition of a common force or capacity to speak which anyone can be presumed to have. This means we are not tied to moving towards greater reconciliation with the world – even as the world should also move towards us – but rather freed to engage in more creative changes. On the sphere of love relations, for instance, Rancière writes:

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[49] Even this very brief formulation already points towards the importance Rancière places on speech and the 'capacity to speak' in struggles. This is another reason Rancière often talks about demonstrating equality as demonstrating that we are speaking beings. I explore both equal intelligence and its connection to 'speaking beings' in detail in chapter three, parts one and two.

Love is not exactly a relation between two people, but a relation between two multiplicities. And it is also a kind of construction, the construction of a landscape, of a universe that can include those multiplicities. So in a certain way, it's a work of art. The loving subject is an artist, and I would say the subject in general has to be thought not simply as a self-related identity but as an artist. Subjectivity is a matter of operations, and those operations are alterations. There is a becoming-other in the very constitution of the other as an object of love.' (Ibid., 89)

Rancière recognises that, for Honneth, the baby too, is an 'artist' but one whose path is more constrained towards the creation of an integrated self-identity (ibid.). Rancière thinks that, rather than taking the 'mother'-baby relationship, this creative work of the artist can be more clearly seen in other forms of love relations which are not given and, whilst often asymmetric, are not based on dependency. In enacting this 'capacity of anyone,' we need not aim at greater self-reconciliation but simply break from the existing constraints in more openly, creative ways. This account takes very seriously, then, the constitutive nature of struggle on our given identities. Indeed, if the loving relation between self and other is rather one of 'a relation between two multiplicities' and a self is conceived as a 'multiplicity,' then we might question more broadly what an undistorted self-relation might look like. On a picture of multiplicities, distortion seems at some level inevitable.

As we have seen, however, Rancière claims we act not only in the 'capacity of anyone' but also under the 'name of anyone.' This is connected to the claim that political subjects dis-identify from their social role and take on an 'impossible subjectification' which does not exist in the current distribution. Rancière's paradigm example, the political subjects

who claimed 'We are all German Jews', sociologically speaking constituted neither Germans nor Jews. For Rancière, those political subjects were no longer acting as French citizens, students, workers or teachers but precisely in the 'name of anyone'. It was an open subjectivity, one which anyone could take on, which disrupted the way in which the typical social categories of the social order were constituted. But it was also not a new subjectivity which could form a new group in the social order: it was disruptive rather than directly constructive of a new social identity.[50] In this sense, struggles can be seen to weaken rather than strengthen our attachment to our identity, leading not to conditions where we are more fully self-related but *less so*. Rather than struggling for the world to see us in a way which does not cause disrespect – which leads to a greater reconciliation between the way we see ourselves and the way the world sees us – Rancière's political subjects intentionally aim for greater dissensus between how we are acting and how we are seen without, importantly, seeking to bring them into closer alignment again.

Indeed, there cannot be, for Rancière, an undistorted relation between the self and the way it is viewed by the world because of the very nature of the social order. We must remember that Rancière's social world is seen as always hierarchical and unequal. Yet at the same time, 'inequality can't function on its own' (ME: 112). For Rancière, as we saw in chapter one, we cannot create an equal social order but at the same time, an unequal social order cannot function without it. This is another reason the world could never reflect the self back in undistorted fashion. This is true as much for the part with a part as for the part without one.[51] And of course, for Rancière, there will always be a 'part

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[50] At the end of this chapter, I question to what extent all political actors are required to dis-identify from their given social role. I will deny they always need to act in the 'name of anyone' in a fully open subjectivity. But I maintain that a form of dis-identification is still required.

[51] See, for instance, chapter three, part two for a discussion on how superiors are as 'stultified' as inferiors.

without a part.' In other words, there is always an other at the heart of a given social configuration. In such a world, conditions for reciprocal self-realisation can never be fully met and there is no room even for an ideal of undistorted self-identities.

I therefore suggest then that Rancière can offer us, through his account of dissensus, an analysis of moments of political interruption which do not rely on – in fact, reject – the postulation of an undistorted self-identity. But at the same time, this presents us with at least three major worries. The first is how to understand the, as yet, unclarified 'equal intelligence' or 'capacity of anyone' which struggling subjects act upon. I return to this important question in chapter three where I defend a reading of this concept. The second is the call to act in the 'name of anyone.' In particular, I ask, does this really capture what is going on in the case of politics of refusal as documented by Simpson? Is the claim 'I am a Mohawk' really represent a dis-identification from a given social role enacted in the 'name of anyone?' In the final section of this chapter, I argue this case is usefully captured by Rancière's 'recognition' struggles' but only if the demand to dis-identify and act in the 'name of anyone' is modified in an important way. This also allows us to address a more general worry, raised in the introduction and to which I return in the conclusion, regarding the availability of the category the 'part without a part' to all political actors, specifically here, indigenous subjects struggling against forces of colonialism. I will also suggest this modification is thinkable without returning us to the reconciliatory picture of an undistorted self-relation that I have rejected.

The final problem, to which I turn now, is that this account of dissensus is so focused on the moment of interruption – of disrupting the distribution through the appearance of a subject which does not make sense within it – that it cannot be meaningfully read as an account of 'recognition.' In what sense can the political subject as artist, as multiplicity,

be *recognised*? This is connected to another problem with this model of the political subject raised in chapter one: its apparently fleeting nature due to its 'impossible' subjectification. For Rancière, when a political subjectivity dis-identifies from her social role, she appears *both* in her unequal social role *and* as an equal political subject. In this way, a subject creates a dissensus, for it is precisely by 'the putting of two worlds in one and the same world' that she is able to problematise the role she had (DIS: 69). But this also means that a political subject cannot simply become a new social subject. No social identity can permanently hold together the two worlds in which she is both unequal and equal at one and the same time. For Rancière, as soon as a political subject takes on a stable, recognisable social identity, even in a reconfigured distribution, she is back in the 'police' and no longer acting politically. On such a picture, it seems impossible to talk about *recognising* a political subject.

Of course, recognition has already been redefined here. In so doing, we have moved a long way from Honneth's model where recognition is tied up with developing the conditions for mutual self-realisation. It is not concerned with a richer account of self-development – which I have suggested entails problematic reconciliatory tendencies with the status quo – but rather a more limited contestation of certain unjust and unequal features of the social order. By redefining recognition as disagreement, we are concerned with redistributing the sensible: with interrupting the categories through which the social world is understood so people can be recognised differently. Nevertheless, for this to count as recognition in any meaningful sense, there needs to be a focus not only on disruption but also on *reconfiguration*. To have any lasting emancipatory influence, actors need to do more than temporarily interrupt the status quo before it returns to its previous configuration. Disagreement and dissensus need to both *interrupt and shift* the distribution.

Rancière certainly recognises this necessary second moment. If political appearances never had any lasting effects, the distribution would never change, a conclusion he explicitly denies. For example, he writes:

> political action is not simply the negative interruption of the police domination. It is a positive practice that concretely tips over the balance of equality and inequality. It inscribes effects of equality in our laws and our practices. And those inscriptions, in turn, allow new political conflicts and actions. (RoD: 125)

Yet Rancière has often been criticised for failing to address the moment of 'reconfiguration' and some critics claim he simply cannot account for it. As one of Rancière's more sympathetic commentators Aletta Norval has argued, dissensus pays insufficient attention to the institutionalisation of gains made during moments of politics. Rancière, she suggests, is caught on the 'horns of a familiar dilemma' between the extraordinary and ordinary division which plagues much political theory (Norval, 2012: 813). She writes:

> Rancière tends to refrain from explicitly engaging with the issues that arise after moments of rupture, when previously excluded senses of wrong become visible and alternative ways of doing things need to become institutionalised, and thus inscribed into the current order. This refusal arises from his much remarked upon division between "politics" and the "police order," as well as the ruptural picture of democracy that accompanies this distinction. (Ibid., 812)

To be clear, Norval does not dismiss Rancière as a thinker of only ruptural moments of interruption. She argues there are neglected, underdeveloped resources within Rancière's work – namely his historical examples – which help us think through the moments of reconfiguration (ibid., 813). But she is concerned that the sharp distinction between politics and police make reconfiguration difficult to account for in his terms. Here I argue with Norval that reconfiguration can be thought on Rancière's – albeit under-theorised – account in the form of 'egalitarian inscriptions' in our laws and practices. But at the end of this section I argue, against her, that we should endorse a less sharply divided, 'porous' reading of politics and police, which allow us to conceptualise how these inscriptions come to be laid down.

Let us begin by taking an example of a legal inscription of equality often discussed by Rancière: the *Rights of Man*. This text was 'inscribed' in the social world as a result of political struggle during the French Revolution. But it is important to note that, for Rancière, the *Rights of Man* did not 'inscribe equality' in any substantive sense. As Deranty reminds us, for Rancière, '[e]quality is not an essence, a value or a goal' (cited in Chambers, 2013: 80).[52] Yet although it does not, for Rancière, confer equality on us as it claims, this does not lead Rancière to conclude that the text is simply ideological. This is Marx's position, who argued the subject of the *Rights of Man* is in fact bourgeois man. On this interpretation, the supposedly universal text works to mask the reality of capitalist domination (Schaap, 2011: 33-34). For Arendt, too, human rights are ideological since their 'true' subject is the citizen. This masks the fact that we only have rights at all by virtue of our membership in a particular community. As a result, she denies there can be such a thing as the human rights of the stateless (ibid.). For Rancière, by contrast, there is

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[52] In that case, the (unrealisable) telos would be a fully equal society. This, of course, would be the institutionalization of a state of 'politics.' See the discussion of Todd May below.

no subject of human rights; but neither are rights simply ideological fictions. Instead, 'the Rights of Man are the rights of those who have not the rights that they have and have the rights that they have not' (DIS: 67). That is to say, they are not substantive rights belonging to any particular group of human beings. But they are rights which can be taken up by those demonstrating that they do not in actual fact enjoy the rights the legislation seems to bestow upon them. On the other hand, by enacting them, they demonstrate they do, in fact, have the rights that they are denied.

For Rancière, Olympe de Gouge is a prime exemplar of a political subject who attempted to use the egalitarian inscription of the *Rights of Man* to claim these rights for women. In the tenth article of her *Declaration of the Rights of Women*, she argued that if women could be sent to the scaffold, then they were also entitled to go to the assembly. This is because, if women could be sentenced to death for a politically motivated public judgement – as she was herself – then they were already political beings in an important sense. As Rancière glosses: 'If they were as equal "as men" under the guillotine, then they had the right to the whole of equality, including equal participation in political life' (DIS: 69). He continues:

> Women, as political subjects, set out to make a two-fold statement. They demonstrated that they were deprived of the rights that they had thanks to the Declaration of Rights and that through their public action that they *had* the rights denied to them by the constitution, that they could *enact* those rights. They acted as subjects of the Rights of Man in the precise sense that I have mentioned. They acted as subjects that did not have the rights that they had and that had the rights that they had not. This is what I call a dissensus. (Ibid.)

On this interpretation, the *Rights of Man* did not confer equality in any substantive sense on de Gouge or, Rancière would suggest, on any other citizen. Nevertheless, it acted as an 'egalitarian inscription' which laid down the equality of 'man' to which de Gouge could appeal in her political statement. Yet, in so doing, she does not simply make a demand to a right wrongfully denied her, although she also does this (in Rancière's terminology, she does not have the rights she has). She also enacts this right, demonstrating *as a political being* that she already has the right that the social order denies her (in Rancière's terminology, she has the rights she has not). To do so, she uses the egalitarian inscription as a tool, which is taken up and used creatively in struggles not foreseen by its original authors. Specifically, she uses it to continue to problematise the division between the political and the non-political and to challenge what counts as politics. As we have seen, for Rancière, politics occurs precisely where we are not supposed to find it within a given distribution.[53]

It is for this reason that Rancière suggests a better police order is one which has more often been interrupted by acts of politics. As he writes:

> There is a worse and a better police – the better one, incidentally, not being the one that adheres to the supposedly natural order of society or to the science of legislators, but the one that all the breaking and entering perpetrated by egalitarian logic has most often jolted out of its "natural" logic. (D: 30-31)

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[53] We can also see this claiming of rights at play in Simpson's use of the Jay Treaty. She is demonstrating how she does not have the rights that she should actually have and, at the same time, in using them she demonstrates the rights she does not actually possess (that the treaty guarantees her but in practice are often denied). I return to the question of whether political actors can use inegalitarian texts in this way below.

This is because, in these orders, there are more 'inscriptions of equality' which are available to be taken up in future acts of politics. In this very limited sense, Deranty is right to claim that Rancière 'acknowledges the notion of moral and historical progress in the recognition of minorities and their rights' and that the law plays a key role in establishing this 'recognition' (Deranty, 2003: 147-148).[54] Yet we should note it is a fundamentally different interpretation to the way legal recognition provides conditions in which individuals can develop self-respect that we found in Honneth.

However, whilst it is important that egalitarian inscriptions offer means and, as I argued in chapter one, motivation for future political struggles,[55] this risks seeing politics as *the* good or an end in itself. Instead, we must also ask what they do to make the police order better *in between* acts of politics. It is important to also conceptualise how the lives of those who have already struggled successfully are in some way improved. How do egalitarian inscriptions improve the lives of those living in police orders – which, as

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[54] As I have indicated, this also means that Rancière is committed to a certain, limited view of backwards-looking progress, constituted by inscriptions of equality, which may make him vulnerable to Allen's critique discussed in part two above. From Allen's perspective, we might worry that in viewing progress through inscriptions of *equality*, we smuggle in a specific modern European way of life. But it is not clear that equality is only European concept. On the basis of Simpson's work, for example, we might suggest it is a fundamental concept in Mohawk political organisation. We might also dispute that presuming equality in struggles is necessarily modern. As May helpfully points out, one does not need to struggle for equality explicitly for the principle behind the struggle to be equality. It can still 'be discerned as an animating assumption by those who are an audience for the movement' (May, 2010: 33). Deranty has argued that equality can be discerned as the animating principle in many pre-modern struggles. For example, he suggests the German peasants who fought in the Bauernkrieg of 1525 struggled on the basis of a universal claim to 'the equal moral standing of each and every person, as creatures sharing the same ontological status under God' (Deranty in RoD: 65).

[55] The traces of past acts of politics can also be considered egalitarian inscriptions. The Rancièrian politics of memory I developed in chapter one is therefore concerned with re-staging these inscriptions, in order to have certain political effects in the present. See chapter one, parts three and four.

Chambers reminds us, are the only places we can live (2013: 69)[56] – as a result of political action? In other words, although the social order will always be unequal and there will always be a need for politics, it also seems to matter how, precisely, particular individuals are unequal.

One answer might be found in a revaluation of the police order. Chambers argues that, since we must live in police orders, it matters what kind of order we live in (ibid., 69; 87). He insists on 'a commitment to and concern with the politics of the police in the quite elemental sense of changing, transforming, and improving our police orders' (ibid., 85). Presumably this will happen both through further acts of politics and through police action. Although Chambers holds on to the division between politics and police,[57] he argues 'police work' should be seen as important and meaningful, from within Rancière's own framework. This means that, against many of Rancière's readers, Chambers insists that police action is centrally important to Rancière's own concerns. If police action is not necessarily to be disparaged, but only conceptually distinguished from the aesthetic emancipation found in politics, then we could bite the bullet and accept certain seemingly 'political' actions are important acts of police. This would also be one possible response to Chanter's concern regarding the status of Sojourner Truth's speech 'Ain't I am woman'.[58] Yet whilst I think Chambers is right to revalue the police,[59] I follow

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[56] This claim is disputed by Todd May who, as I show below, discusses the possibility of institutionalizing politics. Whilst I do not want to fully rule out such a possibility in all instances, I suspect that, if institutions of equality do exist, they would be extremely precarious and temporary. As such, I think the presumption that we live in police orders, at least in the vast majority of instances, is a reasonable assumption.

[57] See further discussion below.

[58] See more on this issue in the introduction, in part four below and in the conclusion. It would also be one way of analysing Simpson's claim 'I am a Mohawk.' See part four below for my solution to these problems which consists in a modification of Rancière's disidentification demand.

Chanter in insisting these actions are political, and should be seen as such by modifying Rancière's terms. If theory does not fit the world, then it is the theory that should change.[60]

Such a solution also raises the problem of judging better and worse police orders in Rancière's terms. Of course, some of this police work could be done on the basis of egalitarian inscriptions. For example, inscriptions of equality need not only be taken up in dissensual political acts: they could also be taken up in disputes which may not reorganise the distribution but nonetheless improve life for people living within that particular police order. For instance, people may use these inscriptions on behalf of others. If states, courts or dominant groups enacted or defended human rights legislation for another group, we see a previous 'egalitarian legislative inscription' being taken up in what Rancière would consider a police action. Since this does not shift the distribution, it does not count as an emancipatory act for Rancière, but it may nonetheless improve the lives of certain oppressed groups. Similarly, a group might claim their rights based on universal legislation in a way which accepts rather than questions their social identity. Mohawk action which presents their case in the terms of the liberal settler state could provide such an example. Whilst for Rancière this might be problematic insofar as the actors remain within a certain unequal, subordinate identity – and does therefore not constitute a 'struggle for recognition' in the non-reconciliatory sense we are considering – we still might well want to claim it constitutes an (albeit limited) improvement of the police order. But whilst police actions might utilise egalitarian inscriptions, there is also

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[59] It also helpfully responds to critics like McNay who argue Rancière's 'obscure, heroic model of action denies the radical potentiality of many other types of political practice, consigning them to the inert order of the police' (McNay, 2014: 166).

[60] However, it depends on what the theory is trying to do. See the conclusion for a discussion of the disruptive critique of the Rancièrian concepts politics and police. Here I argue that we should engage with Rancière's concepts not because they are 'true' in a strong sense but for their potential disruptive effects on the distribution of the sensible.

the distinct possibility they take up other 'inegalitarian' tools – such as non-universal texts. In cases removed from the question of egalitarian inscription, this solution leaves unresolved the question of judging better from worse police orders. If we wanted to pursue this route, we might have to move away from Rancière to a picture of more substantive equality claims: perhaps returning to a picture of recognition on Honneth's model.

A better answer to this question, which remains compatible with the modified Rancièrian account of recognition I am proposing, is to insist that egalitarian inscriptions do not only take the form of legislation, but – as Rancière argued above – also infuse our practices. Aletta Norval (2012) has pointed out how such an account of reconfigured social practices is evident in some of the examples Rancière uses. For example, in Rancière's well-known Aventine Hill example, the plebeians withdraw from Rome and set themselves up as an autonomous society, as a society of beings 'with proper names' just like the patricians (D: 23-26). The ambassador Menenius arrives to offer his apologia to the plebs – explaining the necessary order of domination to them – but in so doing, according to Rancière, he presupposes the equality required to hear and understand that apologia. This undermines the apologia in the same moment he utters it and reveals the contingency of the order which has divided the 'speech' of patricians from the 'noise' of the plebeians. But what particularly interests Norval in this story is the consequence of these actions (2012: 816). Rancière writes:

> [The patricians who come to the Aventine Hill] observe this incredible phenomenon: the plebeians have actually violated the order of the city. They have given themselves names. They have carried out a series of speech acts

linking the life of their bodies to words and word use. In short, in Ballanche's[61] terms, from being "mortals" *they have become "men,"* that is, beings engaging in a collective destiny through words. They *have become beings who may very well make promises and draw up contracts…* [The secret council of the Roman Senate] know when a cycle is over, it is over, whether you like it or not, and they conclude that, since the plebs have become creatures of speech, *there is nothing left to do but to talk to them.* (D: 25-26, *emphasis added*)

It is true that Rancière partly distances himself from this conclusion since he is worried about signing up to a theory of necessary progression (ibid., 26). Nevertheless, the story also emphasises how the social practices of both patricians and plebeians have changed how they interact with each other. The plebeians' practices, in particular their speech acts have changed as a result of the capacities they are taken to have, and take themselves to have. Moreover, the patricians are now talking to the plebeians *qua* speaking beings. This change in practices, I suggest, is an egalitarian inscription which *both reflects and constitutes* a reconfigured distribution and is a change which outlives the moment of politics itself.

For Rancière, of course, taking on a new social identity is the end of politics. The political plebeians had put 'two worlds into one:' appearing both as un-speaking beings and beings who were speaking to the patricians, at one and the same time. But in taking on a social identity, this dissensus – the two worlds in one – comes to an end. After the moment of politics, they are no longer acting in the 'capacity of anyone.' Rather they are acting within the reconfigured identity of 'plebeian' who are recognised as possessing capacities they previously were not taken to have. This means that their reconfigured

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[61] Ballanche is the nineteenth century historian who reinterprets Livy's original telling of this story. It is Ballanche's analysis which Rancière is buiding on.

social identity – reflecting and constituted by their practices – is not the same as it was before. They have taken on the characteristics of beings that can speak and with whom one can negotiate at least with regard to certain political (in the non-Rancièrian use of the term) issues. Whatever other inequalities constitute their identities – and, following Rancière, there will always be hierarchies in the social 'order' – this struggle has resulted in a reconfigured social identity which affects the type of exclusions to which they are subject.

Nevertheless, many theorists have argued that Rancière cannot account for such a re-inscription – and by extension for his own example – within the terms of his theory. Specifically they argue, as we saw in Norval's passage above, that the sharp division between politics and police does not allow us to make such an analysis. If politics and police are conceived as two entirely separate realms, with political actors entirely dis-identified from the social world, how can political dissensus have consequences on the police? This objection was put perhaps most famously by Žižek who criticises Rancière's politics as an 'hysterical gesture' which 'flourishes on bombarding the Police/Power edifice with *impossible* demands, with demands which are 'made to be rejected' (Žižek, 2008: 277). He sees Rancière's politics-police division as a form of 'ultrapolitics' where there is 'no common ground for symbolic conflict' (ibid., 225). Yet much of the secondary literature on – and generally favourable to – Rancière has pressed upon this framing of politics and police by offering new readings of his work. These are works that maintain the division between politics and police as two distinct entities but seek to problematise the ways in which they are understood and how they interact. Here I want to investigate two important, but very different approaches, which converge in their problematisation of the police-politics distinction.

Firstly, Todd May has suggested that it might, in some cases, be possible to create 'institutions of equality' (May, 2008; 2010). In other words, he suggests the possibility exists to institutionalise politics. Whilst this seems antithetical to many of Rancière's own pronouncements – particularly his ruling out of a 'community of equals' (OSP: 84) – May argues that this may be a possible reading of Rancière's own model, if by community Rancière intended 'society in general' rather than particular institutions (May, 2010: 104). This would open the possibility that politics can be institutionalised on a permanent if precarious basis, at least in small collectives. For May, there is empirical evidence that such collectives do exist, and he cites the examples of a food cooperative and an anarchist book press. Whilst this does seem a tenuous reading of Rancière, if May is right in identifying institutions of equality, we have to wonder if the latter's theory does not need remodelling in the light of the evidence. At the least, the burden of proof lies in Rancière's court to show why these are not institutions of equality.[62]

On this view then, in certain, perhaps exceptional instances, politics can be 'institutionalised,' albeit in spheres which remain precarious and probably small-scale. We can interpret this claim in two ways. On the one hand, it could be seen as extending politics into the realm of the police. In institutionalising equality, politics would lose its fleeting character and take on a precarious longevity. In so doing, May confuses the usual divide made between understandings of police and politics and redistributes their properties, suggesting that politics has more in common with the police than we thought. This weakens the divide between them and allows them to inhabit the same realm: the realm in which we live. But on the other hand, as Samuel Chambers argues, this is only achieved at the cost of entrenching the adversarial relationship between the two. He

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[62] In chapter three, I argue for the possible existence of 'emancipatory networks' in relation to educational practices. This could also be seen as 'instituting' equality although there I argue such networks need not necessarily take an institutionalized form.

shows how May interprets the police in opposition to politics where 'the goal of policing is precisely that of eliminating politics' (May, 2008: 43; Chambers, 2013: 77). But this interpretation – whilst true for Platonic archipolitics and postdemocratic neoliberalism[63] – is not something Rancière asserts about the police *in general*. In the other direction, as we have seen, May seeks to supplant police with politics. According to Chambers, for May, 'politics must destroy police' (2013: 67). But, for Rancière, whilst politics disrupts the police, it does not say no to it in its entirety (ibid., 77). The danger for Chambers is not only misreading Rancière, but creating a Manichean opposition between the police and political realms in which 'politics becomes a *pure* force, utterly and radically distinct from and in opposition to any and all police orders' (ibid., 83). This would return us to Žižek's criticism of 'hysterical' provocation where police and political interaction is reduced to warfare. Such a view is also unhelpful for conceptualising the reconfiguration effects of dissensus, since it precludes an active engagement between the two realms.

By contrast, Chambers argues politics and police are not two entirely separate spheres. This is because politics cannot be pure: it 'does not stem from a place outside of the police … There is no place outside of the police' (Rancière cited in ibid., 62). In Rancière's direct formulation: 'There is no 'pure' politics' (TD: 3). It cannot supplant or erase the police: it can only disrupt and reconfigure it (Chambers, 2013: 65). This is not to say that police actions can be seen as politics for Chambers. As we saw above, he argues police and politics must still be held apart. But it does mean 'the divide must be porous; it must allow a certain type of movement over and back' (ibid., 84). If the objects

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[63] Platonic archipolitics is a form of political philosophy which seeks to eliminate politics through a complete harmonisation of the community with its functions (D: 65-70). Neoliberal postdemocracy is a modern form of consensus politics which postulates that everyone is already included, thereby attempting to eliminate the space for politics. Rancière writes that the 'utopia of postdemocracy is that of an uninterrupted count that presents the total of "public opinion" as identical to the body of the people' (D: 103).

of politics are always borrowed from the police, there is always a way in which they move between the spheres. If one envisions politics/police in the porous way Chambers' suggests, there is room opened to conceptualise how politics leads not only to dissensus but also to reconfiguration. For in taking up the same object, it is hard to see how it could fail to ever leave traces on those objects or individuals once the moment of politics is over.[64]

By challenging this view of a sharp division between politics and police, then, I have suggested we can account not only for the moment of dissensus but also a moment of reconfiguration. I have argued that Norval is wrong to emphasise such a sharp division between politics and police, even in her more nuanced account and disputed that the police order is entirely 'undifferentiated' (Norval, 2012: 819). We can, for instance, conceive of a better and worse police by accounting for egalitarian inscriptions. The 'porous' account of the divide between them rules out any possibility of regarding politics as 'pure,' separate and hysterical. Nevertheless, in one sense I think Norval is right to discuss the 'undifferentiated nature' of the police as presented by Rancière, namely the assumption that 'there is one wholly hegemonic form of identification that dominates the police order and from which there is no escape' (ibid., 818). On his picture, as we have seen, political subjectification is the radical and temporary breaking with all identification. Indeed, it is precisely this aspect of Rancière's thought which I will argue in the final section below requires modification, in order to account for Simpson's political claim: 'I am a Mohawk!'

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[64] In the final part of this chapter, and in the conclusion, I will further challenge the division between politics and police.

Part Four: I am a Mohawk!

Having defended Rancièrian disagreement as a useful account of a phenomenon we can meaningfully call 'recognition' – concerned not only with disrupting how we are categorised in the social order, but also reconfiguring that order through egalitarian inscriptions in our laws and practices – I return now to the suggestion made at the end of section two: that Rancière's conception of a 'struggle for recognition' could help us understand what is at stake in the indigenous refusals studied by Audra Simpson. As I suggested, Honneth's model was inappropriate for understanding these cases, due to its postulation of an 'ideal' undistorted self-identity as a telos and an unambiguous good. Nevertheless, these interruptions can still helpfully be thought of, in some sense, as *recognition* struggles since the political subjects are not idealising impasse as a final end point and, in fact, need their demands to be heard, on their own terms. Can we then understand these political acts as Rancièrian recognition struggles? To what extent is the claim 'I am a Mohawk!' a disagreement?

I will discuss (and attempt to resolve) three problems in arguing Rancière can help us understand Simpson's claim. Firstly, to what extent is the subject who uttered these words a political appearance in Rancière's terms? Which of the three criteria – building a stage, dis-identification and subjectification, and acting on the presupposition of equality – are met and in which ways? I then ask whether this give us reason to modify any of Rancière's criteria. Secondly, Simpson's claim is based, as we will see, on the Jay Treaty. But is her use of this *inegalitarian* inscription as a tool for political emancipation compatible with Rancièrian recognition? And finally, is there any way to reconcile Simpson's demands for small-scale recognition communities to support a politics of

refusal with Rancière's insistence that politics requires breaking with, not developing, an ethos?

I firstly examine the three conditions which, as we have seen, Rancière argues must fulfilled for the appearance of a political subject (WIS: 212-213).[65] The first of these – the building of a stage – is the least problematic in the case of Simpson's claim. She can be seen to attempt to build a stage on which to speak by using arguments that bring two things together which are not seen to belong together: she was born in Brooklyn and she is a Mohawk. This is not necessarily confusing for the border agent, since one can be born in Brooklyn and hence American *and* Mohawk. In the agent's world, the identity of Mohawk is compatible with, although ultimately subordinate to, the identity American/Canadian. But Simpson is connecting 'Mohawk' with a certain understanding of sovereignty which can perhaps best be grasped by seeing how she also takes two things apart which are normally seen to belong together: although she was born in Brooklyn, she is not American. This simply does not make sense to the border guard since American citizenship is automatically conferred through birthplace. How can one be born in Brooklyn and be Mohawk but *not* American?

What Simpson is laying claim to is a different understanding of sovereignty and a different understanding of the nation state. By identifying with an earlier political entity,[66] she is challenging the legitimacy of the state which superseded it to lands it views

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[65] See discussion in the introduction and in chapter one, part two.

[66] The claim to be able to cross the border as a Mohawk, rather than an American or Canadian, is made using the Jay Treaty. Signed in 1794 between the US and Britain, it delimited the border between their territories and, in a concession to Native American living along this boundary, recognised the rights of certain nations to occupy certain territory. This included the Iroquois Confederacy nations: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora nations (Simpson, 2014: 133). The Iroquois Confederacy predates the United States and the UK by at least three hundred years (ibid., 25).

unproblematically as its own. Indeed, in her simple assertion, she can be seen to directly challenge the legitimacy of the US state. She also presses at the understanding of America and Canada as lands of *immigrants*. It makes sense to define citizenship on the basis of birthplace in a land of immigrants. But if the new arrivals are rather seen as colonisers and settlers, who wrongfully dispossessed (and continue to dispossess) the previous inhabitants of their land, then the benign, welcoming image of the 'melting pot' – however ideologically inaccurate in other senses – is exposed as an illegitimate, colonising force. So Simpson, I suggest, is making both an argument, based on the legal inscription of the Jay Treaty to which I return below, and opening space for an alternative understanding of the distribution in which she lives.

There is also, I suggest, a clear sense in which Simpson's protest was undertaken on the presupposition of equality. On the one hand, we can make sense of Simpson's claim as an expression of equality by returning to what acceptance of the 'gifts' of US or Canadian citizenship entails, namely:

> acceptance of the dispossession of your lands, of internalising and believing the things that have been taught about you: that you are a savage, that your language is incoherent, that you are less than white people, not quite up to par, that you are then "different," with a different culture that is defined by others and will be according a protected space of legal recognition if your group evidences that "difference" in terms that are sufficient to the settlers' legal eye. (Simpson, 2014: 22)

This demonstrates that a form of inequality is tied up with existing understandings of the identity 'Mohawk.' Part of Simpson's refusal is precisely refuting this presumed inequality

and in refusing categorisation according to the existing, *unequal* distribution. She refuses, for example, to be designated as 'less than white people' or that her own categories of identification or concepts of sovereignty are less valuable or valid.

At the same time, Simpson is claiming to speak meaningfully. Her response 'I am a Mohawk!' is asserted as a legitimate and meaningful response in the context of responding to the border guard's questions. She is forcing her disagreement into that context which, as I show in the next chapter, can be considered a demonstration of her 'equal intelligence' or, in other words, that she is acting in the '*capacity* of anyone'.

Yet even if she is acting in the capacity of anyone, does the equality at work here amount to a claim to speak in the '*name* of anyone?' This overlaps with concerns about the final criterion – the need to disidentify and take on an impossible subjectification. For in the assertion 'I am a Mohawk,' Simpson seems to be doing anything but dis-identifying. Rather, she is laying claim to a particular identity. The question is whether the identity she lays claim to is really an identity which exists in the current configuration of the sensible. As I have already argued, the understanding of 'Mohawk' is significantly different from the identity to which it is typically taken to refer. As Todd May has suggested, it is not, for example, 'women' who take part in political struggles, but the new subject 'women-equal-to-men' (2010: 48). The political subject 'woman' may lay claim to the social description 'woman' but in a disruptive way which interferes with the properties with which it is normally associated.

Yet whilst Simpson's use of 'Mohawk' is disruptive, it is not clear that it is disruptive in the way Rancière suggests. On the one hand, the claim is not attempting to undo the divisions of the existing distribution but, rather, in some sense to assert them differently.

We can see the problem by comparing the case briefly with Todd May's Rancièrian analysis of a lunch sit-in counter during the Civil Rights Movement. There, May argues the aim was not to assert a black identity but to problematise the very division into black and white in the first place (May, 2008: 51). But the Mohawks are not trying to fundamentally undermine the division: they want to draw it differently. They are asserting their continued presence against elimination and their own powers of sovereignty *as a group*. They want to undo current classifications but in order to reassert a classification in their own terms. In short, this subjectivisation is not a fully open identity in the way Rancière envisages. It certainly does not function in the same way as the paradigm example: "We are all German Jews" which is a claim anyone could make since it overlapped with no existing sociological location. Could just anyone claim to be a Mohawk? Simpson's claim still rests on a certain history, on certain legal treaties and ultimately on a certain *identification*.

It thus seems implausible that Simpson is acting in the 'name of anyone.' Of course, one could certainly imagine the claim 'I am a Mohawk' as an open political subjectification fully in Rancière's terms. At the crisis of Oka, when 'warriors' assembled to protect the land, indigenous people travelled from across the country to partake. One could also imagine non-indigenous people, supporting the Mohawks, putting their bodies on the line in defence of their lands and claiming, in a non-literal way, 'I am a Mohawk'. But it seems implausible to say that Simpson's claim – in its given context – can be read in this way. Even if she was speaking as 'Mohawk-as-equal,' she was still – in an important sense – speaking as a Mohawk within an already recognisable social identity. Not just any person could make that claim or, at least, not with the same impact. This is not to say the people who could make such a claim are easily identifiable – as we have seen, the designation 'Mohawk' is highly contested both inside and outside of the community,

particularly given its historically interrupted nature. But, against Rancière, there is a grounding in the social, which is particularly important given that part of the motivation for the Mohawk refusal is the insistence to define their own community. This in turn limits the creativity of what I still wish to call the political. I suggest it makes little sense to limit politics to the hypothetical moment of the non-indigenous claim 'I am a Mohawk!' and exclude Simpson's own claim as simply a police expression, based as it seems to be on the existing distribution of the sensible.

This overlaps with concerns considered briefly in the introduction about the applicability of Rancière's work for feminist and anticolonial purposes. As Tina Chanter argues, the greatest limitation of his account is 'the slide I think Rancière makes too easily, too quickly between, on the one hand, the enactment of equality 'in the name of a category' … between 'workers, women, people of colour' … and 'the name of the anonym' … the name of anyone at all, on the other hand' (Chanter, 2018: 16). She discusses the example of Sojourner Truth, whose speech 'Ain't I a Woman?' questioned whether the women's movement could accommodate – and what it could offer – black slave women. Sojourner Truth was not speaking in 'the name of anyone' but in the 'specificity of black womanhood against the background of an invisibly white figuration of women' (ibid., 17). She was arguing not to count as part of the supposedly universal category 'human' or 'citizen', but specifically as a woman. Should we then discuss her speech as unpolitical, as Rancière would appear to ask us to do?[67] For Chanter, the framework Rancière acquires from Aristotle eclipses: 'the ways in which the politics of racialization are played out in the articulation of feminist and race struggles' and does not allow us to see that 'the logic of politics does not just consist of asking whether or not workers are citizens, or blacks

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[67] It could be re-evaluated as important police work, as Chambers argues above. However, I have already suggested this is unsatisfactory.

are human beings, but also in the question of whether slaves are women or women are slaves' (ibid.).

Yet arguing that Rancière is too tied to an Aristotelian framework might seem puzzling. After all, Rancière is precisely criticising the distinction Aristotle draws between slaves who understand but do not possess *logos* – language, speech, reason – and the citizens who do. He argues that Aristotle's definition of 'political man' is based on a more fundamental aesthetic distribution and that politics consists precisely in contesting the division itself. Nevertheless Chanter shows how, having used this definition of slavery to get the argument off the ground, slavery then drops out of the picture in favour of the struggle between rich and poor. The poor – or people – in Athens are those males who are free by virtue of being born in a city where slavery had been abolished for debt. But by focusing on the people as the poor, we erase both slaves in Athens and those *female* bodies in Athens who, in giving birth to those male citizens, ensure the freedom of poor male citizens. Chanter asks then:

> Even as Rancière's analysis tracks the incursion of equality as the irruption of the pre-political into the police order, insofar as he upholds the struggle of the poor against the rich as the model of political dissensus, does he leave intact an imaginary that feminizes non-Greeks (read non-Europeans), and racialises women? (Chanter 2018: 21)

We can also see the tendency to erase gender and race in favour of class in other areas of Rancière's work. For instance, in his essay on why Emma Bovary had to die, he argues Flaubert needed to sacrifice her to protect serious art from the realm of kitsch. Yet he does not address the question of gender in examining why the 'hysterical' female Emma

is killed by the male artist. He assumes 'that it just happened to be the case that the character who mistakes art for life is the female character of Emma, but it could have been otherwise…' (ibid.: 8). Moreover, in describing Emma as the 'daughter of a farmer,' Rancière downplays the gendered dimension in favour of class. Chanter concludes:

> This erasure of gender happens *in the name of the part that has no part, the anonym*, the logic of the heteron. Rancière overlooks the specificity of gender by making it the equivalent of class.' (Ibid., *emphasis added*)

Chanter therefore suggests Rancière – by missing the gendered[68] dimension of Flaubert's motivations – is complicit in putting to death women and their Oriental counterparts before their voices can be heard as political speech. That this speech is missed is, for Chanter, the result of his insistence that the political subject speaks in the 'name of anyone'.

Following Chanter, I suggest we reject Rancière's insistence that the political subject always speaks in the 'name of anyone.' In other words, I am modifying but not rejecting one of Rancière's key concepts – disidentification – by denying that in all recognition struggles there needs to be a *fully open subjectivisation*. I suggest there is still a dis-identification at play in Simpson's claim insofar as she is disputing how the category Mohawk is normally understood. She is presenting herself as Mohawk-as-equal. Indeed, we can still see all of Rancière's three criteria meaningfully at play in this example –

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[68] She also argues that Rancière misses the colonial dimension of Flaubert's motivations. Specifically, she suggests that Flaubert projected his 'malady' of boredom onto Emma which he suffered as a colonial traveller in Egypt. Flaubert, on this interpretation, makes Emma the representative both of the feminisation of mass culture and displaces his own orientalism onto her, in order to achieve his critical distance as a writer (ibid.: 11).

building a stage, presupposing equality and dis-identification. But her dis-identification is not total. It *matters* that Simpson is talking as a Mohawk. If we make this modification, we are able to imagine a dissensus from the given distribution which both dis-identifies from a given identity and retains certain links to that identity.[69]

This also further contributes to loosening the distinction Rancière makes between the political and the social (or politics and the police). It therefore builds on the argument of the previous section that these spheres should be read as less separate than they often are by critics. Indeed, by building on the porous account of politics and police I offered above, I suggest we can also resolve a second difficulty with understanding Simpson's claim as an example of Rancièrian recognition. As we saw above, the Mohawk's right to cross the border without Canadian or American documentation is based on the Jay Treaty of 1794. Such a document is clearly, in Rancière's terms, an 'inegalitarian text' insofar as it grants rights to a specific third party. Nevertheless, Simpson used the Jay Treaty as the basis for what I argued above was an act of aesthetic emancipation.

As we have seen, Rancière shows how Olympe de Gouge used the egalitarian inscription, the *Rights of Man*, to stage a political act. But as Geneviève Fraisse argues, the 'civil code' was used by women in the same way. However, the Civil Code was inegalitarian insofar as it stated that 'a citizen is any person enjoying all of his civil rights' (Fraisse, 2013: 57). This clearly excluded women at the time who clearly did not enjoy civil rights. Nevertheless, since they were not specifically excluded by name, women still made use of

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[69] Indeed, this picture is perhaps already tacitly at play in the assumption a political subject puts 'two worlds in one:' the world where one is unequal and the world where one is equal at the same time. See discussion of Olympe de Gouges in part three above. If this is the case, then it matters which social identity the political actor had in terms of the impact it is seen to have on the world. I return to consider the question of the applicability of Rancière's 'part without a part' to decolonising struggles in the conclusion.

such texts. As such, she suggests, an 'inegalitarian inscription' can also be used as a potential tool in emancipatory struggles.

Simpson's use of the Jay Treaty works differently to Fraisse's analysis of the Civil Code since the Mohawks are claiming rights that it promises them as a specific group, rather than access to an inscription from which they are excluded. Yet I still suggest the Jay Treaty is a tool – an inegalitarian inscription – through which disruptive claims, in this case to sovereignty, can be made. We could argue that she is actually claiming substantive rights – and she is doing this too, but *she is not only doing this*. Within that context, she is claiming a right to the sovereignty of her people which they *do not have* according to the current distribution.[70]

If we think that politics does not have its own realm but always takes up the tools of the police, there seems no reason to rule out what I have argued to be egalitarian action undertaken from inegalitarian inscriptions. Indeed, for Tyson Lewis, it is possible to find potentially emancipatory egalitarian moments in even the least egalitarian texts. In a discussion of Althusser's inegalitarian pedagogy,[71] he argues against Rancière that:

> If equality is truly presupposed by every form of inequality then we have to read
> for the inscription of democracy within even the most stultifying of discourses
> and practices – and then verify this existence through a dispute… we cannot
> simply dismiss Althusser's theoretical-theatrical-pedagogical machine as mere
> explanation and stultification. Rather we have to find within it the fleeting trace

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[70] One might worry that these are not 'nonexistent rights' in the same way as in Rancière's examples. Nevertheless, in a certain sense, they are the rights of people within a nation which cannot be said within the context of settler state sovereignty to properly exist. It is therefore not clear that what is being claimed is (simply) an existent right.

[71] See more on Althusser as inegalitarian in chapter three, part four.

of equality in order to de-classify Althusser as this or that enemy at all… (Lewis, 2012: 32)

Similarly, I suggest seeking out equality within, or enacting one's equal intelligence on the basis of an inegalitarian inscription, seems to offer emancipatory potential, even against Rancière's own pronouncements.

I have argued, then, for an account of political subjectification which does not require one to always act in the 'name of anyone' but rather allows for the maintenance of *some* connection between the political actor and the social subject. This would mean identification would no longer have a wholly negative character. I want to conclude by briefly suggesting Norval helps us identify a separate but related problem with Rancière's negative account of identification. She suggests his over-reliance on dis-identification cannot provide the grounds for subjectivisation (Norval, 2012: 817). Whilst dis-identification may contribute to opening up new worlds, it also presupposes 'the possibility of reidentifying with an alternative vision' (ibid., 818). Seeing new possibilities requires one to also imagine a different world and different relations between beings.[72] She therefore argues that Rancière requires a more positive account of identification which would allow for 'a much more nuanced explication of processes both of disidentification (turning away from) and of reidentification (turning toward), neither of which can be presumed to take a specific, predetermined political form' (ibid., 818). Norval offers an alternative account – one which moves further away from Rancière – but which I will briefly suggest might help us answer the third problem raised above,

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[72] As we saw in chapter one, such an alternative vision is important for inspiring acts of politics. Rancière also insists, in his encounter with Honneth, that what drives politics is not a desire for equality or an account of suffering, but rather the existence of other possibilities (RoD: 122-123).

namely, how to develop an account of Rancièrian recognition attentive to the conditions of colonial spaces, specifically Coulthard's and Simpson's analysis that recognition communities sustain politics.[73]

Norval suggests we read Rancière alongside Cavell to envision a development of 'democratic ethos' through the 'inscription as exemplar' (2012: 819-825). On this picture, Rancière's singular, historical examples – de Gouges, Gauny, the plebeians – become exemplars of a democratic ethos with which one can identify. She recognizes that this constitutes a move away from Rancière, who would reject the picture of a developed 'ethos' since Rancièrian politics consists precisely in disidentifying from, rather than taking on, an ethos. But she is certainly not alone in arguing that we need to theorise how an ethos can be developed which makes Rancièrian politics more likely to occur and to be taken to occur (see for example Woodford 2017: 90, Panagia 2009: 11)[74] Norval's particular solution has the advantage of maintaining Rancière's focus on singularity and historicity without over-emphasising the fleeting and ruptural at the expense of reconfiguration (Norval, 2012: 820). This development of our ethos would not be liable to the same problematic teleological view of the self that we found in Honneth since Norval, following Cavell, thinks of this ethos in nonteleological, aversive[75] terms which 'leaves no role for the idea of a true, or indeed a false self' (ibid., 822).

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[73] This might also begin to offer an answer to the question of what motivates political struggles, although this is only a suggestion which needs to be further developed. Recall it is to answer this question that Honneth postulates the telos of the undistorted self-relation, which I rejected in part two.

[74] Indeed, my account of sense-scrambling in chapter one and emancipatory networks in chapter three can also be seen as contributing to such a project.

[75] An aversive ethos – which Norval argues we must develop – is concerned with the problematisation of location and a critical attitude to 'affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and the squalid contentment of the times' (Emerson cited in Norval, 2012: 823).

I suggest this potentially provides us with tools for connecting Rancière's interruptive 'struggles for recognition' with the analysis of Simpson and Coulthard which suggested alternative communities of recognition are required to sustain political struggle. Whilst their picture, I suggested, was disruptive of Honneth's model, it potentially posed a greater problem for integrating with Rancière's condition of disidentification. To a certain extent, I suggest this problem has been alleviated by rejecting the need to always act in the 'name of anyone' which would allow for a certain continuation with the social realm. But if we follow Norval in allowing for exemplars to enable re-identification, both during and after politics, we can begin to see how individual political acts can also *create* forms of identification which are then potentially able to sustain struggle.

It might be objected that this works the opposite way around to the proposal made by Simpson and Coulthard. Specifically, the latter called for a community of recognition to sustain acts of politics, rather than acts of politics around which recognition communities[76] can be forged. But, even in the first case – where the community sustains politics – we must ask how that community is to be understood. Whilst, on the one hand, I have suggested the subjectification 'Mohawk' cannot be entirely open – it is not an example where one acts in the 'name of anyone' – on the other, we have to

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[76] It is not clear that an exemplar with whom one can identify can be equated with a recognition community. We might identify with an exemplar, but the exemplar does not recognize us in return. This problem might, however, reflect Norval's Cavell-inspired reading. Cavell is often criticized for focusing too heavily on the individual while Rancière 'has the advantage of explicitly dealing with collective forms of identification' (Norval, 2012: 821). Although I, too, in many examples have dealt with his analysis of singular historical individuals, we should remember that Rancière's political subject is a collective subject. In this sense, it might have been better to investigate the collective refusal at Oka rather than Simpson's individual refusal at the border. Nevertheless, I recognise my suggestion here remains underdeveloped and needs to be elaborated to explain whether and, is so how, this form of identification could act as a *recognition community*. Alternatively, we might suggest that this account provides us with an alternative, although related, source of motivation for sustaining political struggles. This might also provide an alternative to Honneth's telos of an undistorted self-identity to explain why struggles for recognition are taken up.

acknowledge the interrupted and disputed nature of this identity claim, both within and outside of the community. We have seen how it has been thoroughly disrupted by settler colonisation. This means that the claim 'I am a Mohawk' as uttered by Simpson is not unproblematically asserting a given identity which is settled and agreed upon, even within her own community. This means that it can function as a 'semi-open' identification which remains deeply disputed. Those political actors who contest how the identity 'Mohawk' is understood both in the liberal settler state and within the community can, in this sense, be seen as singular, historical exemplars with which re-identification becomes possible.[77] Their acts – 'I am a Mohawk!' or the refusal of Oka, say – can be inscribed as egalitarian inscriptions with which identification becomes possible. These identifications in turn could potentially sustain other refusals, other acts of politics. This takes into account both the dynamic, creative and non-reconciliatory picture of recognition struggles I have suggested we can find in Rancière as well as the demands of Simpson and Coulthard for other community forms of recognition. This might enable us to envisage a form of community to sustain a politics of refusal with which a Rancièrian struggle for recognition can be aligned.

In this chapter, then, I have argued that we can make sense of a 'Rancièrian theory of recognition.' I have argued this presents a dynamic and mutual[78] conception of recognition struggles whilst avoiding the dangerous reconciliatory tendencies of Honneth's work, which result from his postulation of a telos of an undistorted self-relation. I have also shown how disagreement can be thought as recognition insofar as it not only disrupts but also reconfigures the distribution through inscriptions of equality

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[77] Of course, it does not account for those forms of community recognition which are not premised on re-signifying group identification – those concerned with re-cognition.

[78] It is not mutual in Honneth's terms but rather insofar as it changes the distribution for all those living in the social order.

both in legislation and in our practices. To account for the possibility of such inscriptions, I have argued that we should not read the distinction between police and politics as sharply as many of Rancière's critics.

Nevertheless, to make the claim this represents a useful account of a form of recognition applicable to the indigenous struggles I have analysed, I have made an important modification to Rancière's work. Whilst continuing to insist that the three elements – building a stage, disidentification and equality – are at work in the appearance of the political subject, I have disputed that acting on the presupposition of equality requires one to act in the 'name of anyone' or, more specifically, that dis-identification from one's social role is always total. I have concluded by make two final brief suggestions: firstly that inegalitarian inscriptions can also be used for aesthetic political acts, thereby further challenging the sharp distinction between politics and police; and secondly that a more nuanced account of identification might also allow us to imagine political subjects acting as exemplars whom others may 'turn towards' and identify with. This could potentially act as a basis for the development of new 'recognition communities' to motivate future struggles.

However, there is one important question which remains unanswered but towards which I have gestured several times. This is the question of equality in Rancière's work. As we have seen, from a Rancièrian perspective, equality is central to understanding how a political actor breaks with the distribution. Indeed, it is so central to Rancière's work that he now often calls his method a 'method of equality.' But what exactly does a presupposition of equality entail? How can the almost unintelligible postulation of 'equal intelligence' which I raised briefly in part three be understood as the 'capacity of anyone?' And – to return to a question raised by the first chapter – why might the everyday work

of explanation be seen to undermine the presupposition of equality? I turn to this question in the final chapter in a discussion of a third and final emancipatory practice: what I will call 'emancipatory education.'

Chapter Three: Beyond explanation. On equality, emancipation and education

In the previous two chapters, I have argued that Rancière's understanding of aesthetic emancipation helps us to reconceptualise two political practices: the politics of memory and struggles for recognition. In this chapter, I examine the impact of his thought on one final practice: what we might call 'emancipatory education.' By this I mean educational practices aimed explicitly at producing emancipatory consequences for those involved.

The role of education has long been linked to emancipation. But in recent history, it is perhaps in so-called critical pedagogies that we get the strongest statement of the emancipatory role of certain educational practices. These were developed particularly after the Second World War in Germany with the aim of analysing oppressive structures in order to bring about 'demystification' and 'liberation from dogmatism' (cited in Biesta, 2017: 54). Critical pedagogies are also associated with decolonising projects, most notably in the work of one of the most famous critical pedagogues, Paulo Freire (2017). These critical pedagogies examine not only the emancipatory potential of the forms of education they advocate, but also the complicity of traditional forms of education in maintaining relations of domination.[1]

What we might call emancipatory educational practices are also associated with the Frankfurt School. This is not primarily due to their role in developing pedagogical approaches, although thinkers from the school have had an influence on educational

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[1] Modern anti-colonising struggles in education, such as the Rhodes Must Fall movement examined in the introduction or campaigns like 'Why is my curriculum white?' are also concerned with developing alternative (liberating) practices to counter the anti-emancipatory legacy of colonialism of mainstream pedagogies.

theory.[2] Rather, Critical Theory – at least in its Frankfurt School form – aims to have emancipatory consequences by producing greater knowledge of processes of domination. Ideology critique is a prime example[3] of a practice associated with the school[4] which, at least in certain forms, seeks to explain how ideology functions to conceal processes of domination from those subject to them. By providing such knowledge these critiques aim, at least in idealised forms, to give *good reasons* to the oppressed to emancipate themselves. There is therefore a clear educational role here for theorists which is linked primarily to the emancipatory potential of their theory.[5]

Yet Rancière's account of equality raises important questions both for critical pedagogues as well as for social critics aiming at emancipation. As I explore in the first half of the chapter, Rancière rejects the idea that one can emancipate others if one fails to presume their equality – understood as 'equal intelligence' – from the very beginning. Whilst, for Rancière, emancipatory acts start by deducing equality from understanding, *stultification* occurs when one begins with the opposite deduction: the deduction of inequality. Yet we should not think that 'presuming inequality' makes a person inegalitarian in any typical

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[2] For instance, the early work of Jürgen Habermas influenced the development of 'kritische Pädagogik' in Germany. See for example the work of Klaus Mollenhauer (Biesta, 2017: 54) as well as Murphy and Fleming's (2010) edited collection, *Habermas, Critical Theory and Education.*

[3] Due to its status as an exemplary case of a theory with emancipatory educational ambitions, I discuss ideology critique in more detail in part four below.

[4] However, this is not to say that ideology critique is universally endorsed by all Frankfurt School theorists. Neither is the definition of 'ideology' or 'ideology critique' widely agreed upon. Indeed, the concept is arguably one of the most contentious in political theory. For example, in his book on ideology, Eagleton gives sixteen different definitions of ideology, not all of which are compatible with each other (Eagleton, 2007: 1-2). He also discusses at length objections to the concept (ibid., particularly 1-31). This has led many theorists to reject both the concept of ideology and ideology critique as not 'worth the trouble' (Rorty cited in Jaeggi, 2009: 63).

[5] Indeed, in a weaker form, even Fraser's definition of Critical Theory with which we started – the 'self-*clarification* of the struggles and wishes of the age' (Fraser, 1985: 97, *emphasis added*) – foresees an educational role for the theorist insofar as she brings a higher degree of clarity to the movement with which she identifies. This self-clarification should, moreover, contribute to fulfilling the emancipatory aims of the movement.

sense. Indeed, as I explore at length in this chapter, Rancière suggests that stultifying education is typified in the common practice of *explanation*. For Rancière, in explaining to another, despite my best intentions, I deny that she already understands.[6] This includes the idea, central to the perceived egalitarianism of most critical pedagogies, that one does not yet understand but could come to do so.

But this means that Rancière's critique is targeted not against those who accept inequality and unfreedom, but precisely at well-intentioned progressives who believe in equality and aim, through their work, to contribute to the emancipation of oppressed groups. It is for this reason that his most sustained exploration of equal intelligence follows the eccentric nineteenth century pedagogue Joseph Jacotot (IS).[7] Rancière is interested in Jacotot because, at the beginning of the 'progressive era' – just as an 'enormous machine was revving up to promote equality through instruction' – Jacotot 'was the only *egalitarian* to perceive the representation and institutionalization of progress as a renouncing of the moral and intellectual adventure of equality, public instruction as the grief-work of emancipation…' (ibid., 134). Likewise, according to Bingham and Biesta:

> The ingenuity in Rancière's work lies first and foremost in the fact that he is able to show that what is done under and in the name of equality, democracy and emancipation often results in its opposite in that it reproduces inequality and keeps people in their place. What matters, therefore, is not *that* we are committed

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[6] I critically examine this formulation in more detail in part four below.

[7] Jacotot's critique was directed against the new progressive methods. In fact, in the 'old' model, which was compatible with a hierarchical Great Chain of Being and the 'Old Master', Jacotot saw potentially more wiggle-room for intellectual emancipation. Rancière writes: 'The child who recites under the threat of the rod obeys the rod and that's all: he will apply his intelligence to something else' (IS: 8). As I suggest below, this suggested there was some room to dissociate will and knowledge. The wriggle room arose from a contradiction between the progress implied by education and a conservative belief that everything was better before: both were stultifying but 'in a disorderly fashion' (IS: 119).

to equality, democracy and emancipation, but *how* we are committed to it and *how* we express and articulate this commitment. Rancière thus introduces a critical difference within the discourse on emancipation, equality and democracy. (2010: 45)

Rancière's critique – taken and extended from Jacotot's – is precisely against those who claim to believe in equality and emancipation, and for this reason critical pedagogies and critical social theories are most vulnerable to it.

But this controversial and counter-intuitive thesis seems problematic for rethinking critical theory with Rancière, both in the case that we accept it and in the case that we reject it. On the one hand, in seemingly ruling out all forms of explanation, Rancière has been seen to provide an unnecessarily restrictive account of emancipation which ultimately works against emancipatory aims. It can, for example, be seen to blame the oppressed for their own oppression – their own failure to emancipate themselves – or at the least to rule out practices which might well have important liberating effects. Indeed, it raises the important question as to what a critical theory would do if it rejected all explanation: and what, of course, Rancière takes himself to be doing.[8] This raises problems for my claim that Rancière can helpfully be read as a critical theorist.

On the other hand, if his account can be upheld, it seems to draw a sharp divide between his thought and that of those he rejects, including the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School. Their practice could be seen as, at best, failing to contribute towards

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[8] I discuss this further in the conclusion.

emancipatory action, and at worst, fundamentally undermining it.[9] Indeed this is the basis for Rancière's rejection of what he calls with broad brushstrokes 'the tradition of critique': its 'demystifying' pretensions to *explain* the hidden truth of their oppression to those 'mystified' by illusion.[10] But if these forms of critique in fact undermine each other, then can we really read Rancière alongside certain Frankfurt School theorists and could his account of aesthetic emancipation ever supplement their work, even precariously?[11]

I want to take a middle ground in this chapter. Firstly, I argue we can make sense of Rancière's concept of equality as equal intelligence. This chapter can therefore also be seen as an attempt to clarify the central and counter-intuitive notion of the 'presupposition of equality' in Rancière's thought which has thus far been elusive. In particular, the account of acting on one's equal intelligence should be understood as a full elaboration of acting 'in the capacity of anyone' which I discussed briefly, and inadequately, in chapter two. In the first section, then, I defend a reading of equality as equality of intelligence – and for the centrality of this notion in Rancière's political work. To do so, I rely primarily on *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, the first work in which the concept of equal intelligence was explicitly developed.[12]

In the second section, I turn to the critique of stultification: the troubling claim first raised in chapter one that presuming inequality – that one does not yet already

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[9] See part two on the way stultification both fails to motivate and, more seriously, actively inhibits emancipatory action.

[10] See further discussion on this at the end of the introduction.

[11] If this last claim can be upheld, then it casts doubt on the albeit precarious alliance between the two forms of the politics of memory developed by Rancière and McCarthy which I discussed at the end of chapter one.

[12] A commitment to equality is already strongly present in earlier works such as *The Lessons of Althusser* and *Proletarian Nights*. Nevertheless, its first full-length explicit theorization, particularly in the form of 'equal intelligence', occurred in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

understand – can never have emancipatory consequences. Through an examination of the concept of explanation, I show how (certain)[13] explanations operate on a logic which fails to encourage aesthetic emancipatory acts of either the political or intellectual variety. I suggest this points us in the direction of important, neglected educational practices which promote such emancipatory acts.[14] But I also partially defend the stronger – negative – conclusion that 'stultifying explanation' can actively work against the uptake of such action through the effects it produces on the 'will', specifically on our courage and our 'attention.' As such, I defend the idea that emancipation understood in its specific aesthetic form – as moving out of place – can indeed be inhibited by certain forms of explanation. In this sense I point to the usefulness and relevance of Rancière's critique for critical theory.[15]

In the second half of the chapter, I turn to the consequences of the discussion of equal intelligence and stultification firstly for critical pedagogues and secondly for critical theorists. In part three, I examine Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy in the light of Rancière's critique of stultification. I turn to Freire for a number of reasons. Freire's work has the advantage of seeming to share many of Rancière's concerns. Indeed the translator of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Kristin Ross, says the reason she became interested in doing the translation 'was the way Rancière's book seemed to resonate, however slightly, with earlier interventions like … Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*' (Ross, 2009: 16). In relation to this project, Freire is particularly relevant insofar as he is not only concerned with emancipation in colonial spaces, but was also heavily influenced by

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[13] This 'certain' is very important, although I will not discuss it directly until part four.

[14] For instance, as I show in part three, there is a link with the sense-scrambling project discussed at the end of chapter one.

[15] However, it should be noted that, in the fourth section, I seek a more nuanced account of explanation to make this account plausible, which also allows me to avoid the strong rejection of the 'tradition of critique' found in Rancière's own writing.

the Western Marxist tradition.[16] It is perhaps no surprise that other theorists have taken up the link between Freire and Rancière and this chapter builds on those accounts.[17] But even more importantly, I suggest that Freire allows us to identify both the value and limitations of Rancière's critique of stultification. I focus particularly on the affirmative project of emancipation we find in Rancière by examining the alternative educational practices of the ignorant schoolmaster and the practice of perceptual alienation.[18] However, at the same time, reading Rancière against Freire also draws our attention to the uni-directional and individualistic picture of emancipation in Rancière's work, and points us towards the importance of conceiving emancipatory networks.

However, it is less clear to what extent the negative stultifying critique of critical pedagogies can be upheld. Whilst I tentatively suggest that Freire himself can be shown to hold onto a potentially problematic account of explanation, I question whether this is sufficient to dismiss his work as stultifying. More generally I ask whether we should, with Rancière, dismiss all forms of explanation. To investigate this question, I turn from Freire's critical pedagogy to critical social theory, and to ideology critique in particular. This is because, I suggest, a more detailed account of the problems of explanation can be found in Rancière's critique of Althusser's concept of ideology and ideology critique.[19] I

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[16] For instance, as I show below, his move from emancipating others to emancipating 'with' is described explicitly as a modification of Lukács' thought where 'the requirement is [no longer] seen … in terms of explaining to, but rather dialoguing with the people about their actions' (Freire, 2017: 27).

[17] See for example Lewis 2012; Galloway 2012; Bingham and Biesta 2010; Biesta 2017. It also builds on the literature regarding Rancière's critique of Althusserian ideology and pedagogy (for example, Lewis 2012: 22-38) and Rancière's critique of Bourdieu's 'stultifying' pedagogy (PP: 165-202; Kastner and Sonderegger, 2014; Nordmann 2006; Pelletier 2009; Sonderegger 2012).

[18] This is directly related to the discussion of what I called 'sense-scrambling' in chapter one.

[19] Note I do not necessarily endorse Rancière's critique. What is important is how the critique functions, rather than if it is correct with respect to Althusser. Some theorists

identify three key features – the totalising nature of ideology, the division between ideology and science, and the suspicion of 'words' – which, I suggest, *if* present would lead to stultifying effects.

I then examine whether a recent account of ideology critique as developed by the Frankfurt School theorist Rahel Jaeggi, supplemented by the critical social theory of Robin Celikates, is vulnerable to this critique. These theorists are interesting for my purposes since they attempt to explicitly combat the elitist and asymmetrical reputation of ideology critique. Whilst they both reject the first two criteria, they attempt to do so whilst maintaining a distrust of words. I will argue that, in so doing, they point us in the direction of a more nuanced, differentiated account of explanation. This means that whilst stultifying consequences can still be seen as a potential problem for many forms of explanation,[20] this account allows us to reject the implausible conclusion that *all* forms of explanations have stultifying effects. Indeed, I tentatively suggest there are closer parallels between Rancière's own critical interventions and forms of more modest critical theory, even in the form of ideology critique, than his polemical rejection of the latter suggests.

Part One: The equality of intelligence

Rancière's most sustained exploration of the equality of intelligence takes place in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, an early work exploring the thought of the radical nineteenth century

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have noted limitations of Rancière's assessment of Althusser (see for instance Lewis, 2012: 22-38).

[20] Toscano has suggested the problems Rancière identified in Althusser are no longer relevant for the way sociology is carried out today (2011: 230). I follow Celikates, however, who argues for their continued importance and that Rancière's critique is 'alles andere als überholt' [*anything but outdated*] (Celikates, 2014: 143).

pedagogue Joseph Jacotot. With the return of the Bourbon monarchy in 1815, the Republican Jacotot found himself in exile from his native France in the Netherlands. Neither the French schoolmaster nor his Flemish-speaking students could speak the other's language. Jacotot asked the students to read a bilingual book and then write an essay on it in French. When the students returned reasonable work, Jacotot was amazed. He had not *explained* anything to his students: he had not, for example, explained the rules of French grammar or the meaning and usage of certain lexis. Jacotot concluded from this 'chance event' (IS: 133)[21] that what he had presumed throughout his long teaching career about the necessity of explanation was incorrect. In fact, one could dissociate knowledge from teaching. This meant one could teach what one did not know oneself, simply by propelling the will. In other words, the teacher need only force, encourage or otherwise motivate the student to keep going. In this way, one could 'teach'[22] without explication.

This is possible, Jacotot and Rancière[23] argue, since we all already know many things which were never explained to us. The student is no *tabula rasa* or, in Paulo Freire's words, no empty 'receptacle' to be 'filled' (2017: 45).[24] Rather we have learnt any number of things by figuring them out ourselves by comparing what we know to what we do not.

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[21] Chance plays a large role in Rancière's own work too. For instance, his focus on Schiller and Kant's aesthetics – and how they interlinked with Gauny (see chapter one, part three) – was, he writes, the result of 'stumbling on the *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* in a second-hand bookshop. Once again, chance plays a big role in my itinerary, along with autodidacticism in practice and not just celebrated in theory' (ME: 75). See below on 'searching and finding' – not what one was looking for, but *finding something*.

[22] I will explore in what sense this can be called 'teaching' below. Once again, we should probably understand the term 'teaching' in the form of a disagreement.

[23] In the *Ignorant Schoolmaster*, as many commentators have noted, the voices of Jacotot and Rancière are often indistinguishable (for example Ross in IS: xxii; Sonderegger, 2014: 57). This represents Rancière's method of equality in action: not assuming mastery over Jacotot's text and explaining it, but 'adding his voice' to Jacotot's. For this reason, I sometimes refer to the author as Jacotot/Rancière.

[24] For more on Freire, see part three below.

That we can do so is best demonstrated, for Jacotot, through the acquisition of our first language.[25] Since we need at least some language in order to understand an explanation, we cannot learn at least the basics of language through explanation. Similarly, a speaker of a language cannot explain all the possible uses of a particular element of language; rather the child learns by trial and error how to extend their use of language into new contexts. As Bingham and Biesta write:

> [Rancière's] claim that the mother tongue is the 'most difficult [of apprenticeships] certainly rests upon the irascibility of language. Language is not one with science. It is not one with literature. It is not one with history, geography or any other curriculum that has been penned by human hand. Living, spoken language escapes the codification of educational representation. Especially in the form of one's mother tongue, it can only – *only* – be learned in the random and idiosyncratic ways that children do learn languages. It is the most difficult of apprenticeships precisely because one *must* go about learning it on one's own, without the help of a map or a guidebook, without even a teacher who has a plan. (2010: 56)

This is not to say there is no role for other speakers of the language. One can only learn a language through hearing it spoken by – and speaking with – speakers of that language. These speakers often find themselves answering the child's question 'What is that?' or

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[25] It is no coincidence that the example is the acquisition of our first language: the very property which makes us a speaking being. As we have seen, counting as a 'speaking being' is a key idea in Rancière's political work. I will discuss the overlaps between his critique of pedagogical logic and his political work throughout this chapter.

correcting their errors. But the form of 'teaching' which goes on when one learns their mother tongue is, for Rancière and Jacotot, not primarily a process of explanation.[26]

It seems relatively uncontroversial that people *can* learn without explanation: we have all learnt (and do all learn) in this way and have observed others to do so. But Jacotot and Rancière draw much stronger conclusions from this 'chance event.' They hypothesise that it *demonstrates* what they call the '*equality* of *intelligence*.' We have to be very careful with all three terms in order to understand the claim. Asserting we are equally intelligent is not to claim that all practical displays or manifestations of intelligence are the same. We can observe that some people perform certain tasks better than others. Nevertheless, Jacotot and Rancière reject the argument that, because someone performs better than another, they are 'therefore' more intelligent. For Jacotot/Rancière, this is to give a name to the phenomenon, rather than an explanation for it (IS: 49). Instead, we can postulate that there is 'inequality in the *manifestations* of intelligence, according to the greater or lesser energy communicated to the intelligence by the will for discovering and combining new relations' (ibid., 27). Here, different manifestations of intelligence are explained[27] by the effort of the will. Jacotot's 'chance' encounter, as well as his experience of the revolutionary period, had allowed him to observe what the human will could do when prompted by need, circumstance or a demanding schoolmaster. He:

> knew what the will of individuals and the peril of the country could engender in the way of unknown capacities, in circumstances where urgency demanded destroying the stages of explicative progression. He thought that this exceptional

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[26] It is certainly not an explanation in the narrow sense examined in part four and associated with the threefold problematisation of ideology critique.

[27] Note this seems like a contradiction and it might still turn out to be one. However, as I explore shortly this 'explanation' is, for Rancière, a hypothesis.

state, dictated by the nation's need, was no different in principle from the urgency that dictates the exploration of the world by the child or from that other urgency that constrains the singular path of learned men and inventors. Through the experiment of the child, the learned man, and the revolutionary, the method of *chance* so successfully practiced by the Flemish students revealed its second secret. The method of equality was above all a method of the will. One could learn by oneself and without a master explicator when one wanted to, propelled by one's desire or by the constraint of the situation.' (Ibid., 12)

In other words, in situations where need, circumstance, desire or another will propel an individual on, one can observe – in any speaking being – this form of intelligence at work.

Yet by shifting from intelligence to will, are Rancière and Jacotot not adopting the dangerous position of blaming the victim for not trying hard enough? Jacotot and Rancière reject the conclusion that lesser manifestations of intelligence must be interpreted as the result of an individual's moral failing and argue instead it could equally be a social failing depending on their location. Rancière writes:

It is useless to discuss whether their [common people's] "lesser" intelligence is an effect of nature or an effect of society: they develop the intelligence that the needs and circumstances of their existence demand of them. There where need ceases, intelligence slumbers, unless some stronger will makes itself understood and says: continue…' (Ibid., 51)

Manifestations of intelligence may, then, be unequal/dissimilar but for Rancière this does not prove that *intelligence itself* is unequal.[28]

Rather than defining intelligence as a capacity measurable in its manifestations – through IQ tests and so on – Jacotot/Rancière redefine it as 'the power to make oneself understood through another's verification' (ibid., 72). For Rancière this is a power which everyone possesses and which is observable in many practical manifestations: and in exemplary form in the learning of our native language.[29] This is certainly an unusual definition of intelligence but I suggest we can make some sense of it through a comparison with our discussion of 'understanding' in chapter one.[30] There we saw that from the question of whether one understands an order, Rancière argues we can either deduce equality or inequality (D: 49). If an inferior understands an order and that they should obey it, they seem to be understanding their inequality with respect to the issuer of the order. But to understand that order, they also need to understand a great many prior things beyond the content of that order, not least that they should obey.[31] For Rancière, this means the inferior and the superior share in a common language to which both have access. They are the same – or, for Rancière, equal – insofar as they share in this language. Specifically, as sharers in a common language, they have the power to

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[28] For Rancière, as I show at the end of this section, we do not need to prove the equality of intelligence: it is sufficient that we cannot prove the *inequality* of intelligence. Some commentators have questioned whether attributing different applications of the will to social location is a sufficient response to this worry. Sonderegger argues there are 'two Rancière's – not dissimilar to the two Kants Foucault distinguishes' and that there is an unavoidable tension between the first Rancière who suggests remaining in the 'minority' is a moral or epistemological lack; and the second who knows that it is 'self-confidence and courage that are needed for emancipation' (Sonderegger, 2014: 60). See more on confidence and courage below, particularly part three on emancipatory networks.

[29] Note that this redefined power is not measurable or divisible for Rancière. I return to this point below.

[30] See chapter one, part two.

[31] Note there is a parallel here with the student who needs to understand many things – not least of all her mother tongue – in order to understand the schoolmaster's explanation.

potentially make themselves understood and to have that performance verified by another. If either party did not share in the common language, then neither would be able to verify the equality of the other. As Rancière writes, 'only an equal understands an equal' (IS: 72).[32]

Equality as equal intelligence is therefore intimately connected, for Rancière, to a particular concept of *understanding*. Presuming equal intelligence means presuming we belong to a common language and therefore that we can both understand others and can make ourselves understood. For Rancière, this is always already a possibility and we do not need to – and in fact, should not – postulate that additional explanation is needed for such understanding to take place. But to what extent can we really presume that everyone always already understands another, without help or explanation? It simply sounds wrong to suggest, for instance, that a primary school child – or indeed, any non-specialist – will understand an advanced mathematics lecture. Again, to make sense of the claim, we must remember that key terminology in Rancière is subject to disagreement. Here, understanding has been separated from questions of knowledge or correct interpretation. Rather, understanding is 'never more than translating, that is, giving the equivalent of a text, but in no way its reason' (ibid., 9). That is to say, in hearing another speak, one translates what they say into one's own terms and in reporting that speech, one makes their own translation of that speech. That is not to say we could all search for and find the *correct* answer but:

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[32] Here we can potentially see a parallel with Hegel's master-slave parable where the slave is unable to recognize the master due to their inequality. I discuss the parallel further in part two below in the discussion of inferiority and superiority.

> Whoever looks always finds. He doesn't necessarily find what he was looking for, and even less what he was supposed to find. But he finds something new to relate to the *thing* that he already knows… (Ibid., 33)

Like the child learning her native language, she who seeks using her power of equal intelligence will find something, even if she cannot predict in advance *what* she will find. This is the reason chance plays such a large role for Jacotot/Rancière. Equal intelligence for Rancière is this operation of searching and translating, guided by chance and detached from questions of *correctly* interpreting or understanding.[33] This is also why explanation is, for Rancière, not seen as necessary for understanding. No one needs another to explain the (hidden) meaning of a text to them if understanding is a matter of translating into one's own words. This is because the explanation would be as much in need of translating as any other discourse.[34]

A model of understanding as translation utilises a poetic, creative model of speech. In 'translating,' words can be extended into new contexts, used creatively in disagreements, appropriated, and used as world-opening metaphors in political acts.[35] But, Rancière suggests, this creative model of speech also demonstrates the singular nature of 'intelligence' – that there is not one 'scientific' or 'rational' form of intelligence at work in

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[33] Nonetheless, Rancière also rejects any model of language which allows for a practice of 'infinite readings' (DW: 114): in other words, an infinite number of equally plausible readings. In terms of intellectual emancipation, as I explore in part three below, the ignorant schoolmaster might not test the validity of what we typically call understanding, but he checks that *attention has been paid*. The student is called upon to continuously justify her own translation and path of intellectual discovery by pointing to the facts which support her interpretation. This means it is not the case that any interpretation or translation is as good as any other.

[34] Instead, for Rancière, the teacher's explanation brings a premature end to the work of searching – of translating as understanding – of which we are all capable. See section two on stultification below.

[35] For more on world-opening metaphors see chapter one, part two.

the teacher and another 'common sense' operating in children, manual workers, women and so on. He writes:

> In the act of speaking, man doesn't transmit his knowledge, he makes poetry; he translates and invites others to do the same. He communicates as an *artisan*: as a person who handles words like tools. Man communicates with man through the works of his hands just as through the words of his speech… And the artisan's emancipation is first the regaining of that story, the consciousness that one's material activity is of the nature of discourse.' (Ibid., 65)

If communicating or *forcing oneself to be understood* occurs through works of our hands as well as tools, then the same processes of searching, translating, understanding others and forcing oneself to be understood – in short equal intelligence – can be seen to be at work here too. Since many hierarchical divisions have historically been based on the division between those who work with their heads and those who work with their hands, the assertion that the same intelligence is at work in both cases has potentially radical consequences for undermining the distribution of the sensible.[36]

But this is only one sense in which equal intelligence is indivisible or immeasurable for Rancière. For Rancière, intelligence is also not something we can have more or less of. Rather, it is a power we possess which we can use or fail to use, but it cannot be reduced, increased or destroyed. The mere possession of this immeasurable power is the basis for

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[36] As we saw in chapter one, in *Proletarian Nights* he argued that working class emancipation was not about acquiring knowledge nor about affirming a workers' culture but rather constituted 'a rupture in the traditional division assigning the privilege of thought to some and the tasks of production to others' (PP: 219). Their emancipation was based on 'the transgressive will … to act as if intellectual equality were indeed real and effectual' (ibid.).

the claim of equality. Moreover, possessing equal intelligence – or the power to understand and make oneself understood – must, for Rancière, be located firmly in the present. If not, Rancière worries, we deny that people can potentially make themselves understood by another, here and now.[37] This is the final and most radical 'division' of the intelligence which he rejects: a division between those who understand *now* and those who do not understand *yet*. This means that those who presume equal intelligence cannot argue that equality consists in the assumption that people could understand given the right training or education. In other words, we cannot presume they are only *potentially* equally intelligent, but not equally intelligent *yet*. Equal intelligence for Rancière/Jacotot cannot be divided and it cannot be delayed.[38]

But is it really the case that the power to make ourselves understood cannot be inhibited, reduced or delayed? In fact, Rancière recognises a whole series of reasons why we might not make use of our equal intelligence. For example, he is not committed to the idea that equality can always be manifested in political acts. He argues that 'what makes the present situation so painful for the cause of equality … is [that w]hat is today in the process of disappearing is the existence of places where equality and inequality meet' (ME: 113). As we have seen, dissensus comes from placing the two worlds in one: the world in which one is equal and the world in which one is unequal.[39] In border struggles,

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[37] I say potentially here because there are other reasons a speaker may not successfully have their speech understood by another. For example, their will to do so may be inhibited; or their speech may fail to shift the existing distribution of the sensible and be taken as speech. But asserting we potentially have the power to make ourselves understood here and how has important consequences for political and intellectual emancipation as I explore below.

[38] As I argue in section two below, this is the fundamental problem with arguing we need explanation or knowledge to take up our equality: it denies our ability to exercise equality in the present.

[39] In a recent interview, he argued this was what was so important about worker spaces – where the two worlds met. (ME: 113) This is perhaps another reason that worker emancipation is a prime example of Rancièrian politics.

for instance, citizens and migrants are kept apart and there is increasingly no space for demonstrating equality (Rigby and Schlembach, 2013). This makes politics far harder, if not impossible, to stage. However this is due to *circumstances*, rather than an inhibition or reduction of the power of equal intelligence itself.

Rancière also recognises there are a whole range of circumstances where people do not use their 'equal intelligence,' when one is not compelled by need, circumstances or encouragement. That is to say, there are many factors which affect our 'will.' Rancière certainly does not rule out the possibility that other forms of action might be needed to prompt the will 'there where need slumbers' (IS: 51).[40] Again, the will can be seen as responsible for differentiated manifestations of intelligence.

But is it really the case that a capacity or power *itself* – and not simply the will to use it – cannot be inhibited by domination? Can situations of inequality really not inhibit the power to search, find, translate, understand itself? For example, could one not be seen to exercise it better or worse depending on the extent to which one practices? The question is how a 'better exercise' of equal intelligence might be measured. Of course, according to Rancière's definition, it cannot be measured according to whether one finds the *correct* answer (since it is simply of finding something), but could one not search more quickly or slowly or, in Jacotot's words, pay more or less attention to the facts one is observing so as to use their equal intelligence *better*? Indeed, Jacotot/Rancière recognise that an 'ignorant schoolmaster' might be needed to keep motivating us in the situations where

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[40] This points the way to a positive project of what we might still call 'emancipatory education' in Rancièrian terms. Presupposing there is such a thing as equal intelligence, they ask, what action might propel one to take up one's equality? I turn to this question in section three.

we use our power of equal intelligence *poorly*.[41] But for them, this can be explained by a failure to pay attention: to take note of the facts in front of us, to continue to search, to keep going. Again, failing to pay attention is a matter not of the power itself, but of how our will is distracted from using it.[42] There may, then, be much work needed in order to help us exercise our equal intelligence. Indeed, as I explore in section two below, Rancière is only committed to the idea that, in order to exercise equal intelligence, *we do not need to be given knowledge in the form of explanation, and specifically explanation of our inequality*.

Equal intelligence is defined, then, as the equal possession of a power to understand and make oneself understood, as sharers in a common language, right here and now.[43] But to be clear, whilst Rancière has argued the case for equal intelligence, he also claims not to be offering a proof.[44] We must therefore not misunderstand what he means by a *demonstration* which, in many places, he calls an 'opinion.' He writes:

> Let's limit ourselves to the facts: we have seen children and adults learn by themselves, without a master explicator, how to read, write, play music, and speak foreign languages. We believe these facts can be explained by the equality of intelligence. This is an opinion whose verification we pursue. It's true there is a difficulty in all this… We can never say: take two equal minds and place them in such and such a condition. We know intelligence by its effects. But we cannot isolate it, measure it. We are reduced to multiplying the experiments inspired by

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[41] See part three below for the way the ignorant schoolmaster 'verifies' the search.

[42] See more on distraction in part two below.

[43] It can also be understood as acting in the 'capacity of anyone' which I briefly examined in chapter two, part three.

[44] This is analogous to the 'deduction' discussed in chapter one, whereby one could either deduce equality or inequality from understanding. No definitive proof can ultimately be given that we are deducing in the right way so equality must be taken up and verified, over and over again. This is one reason why equality is so demanding and why people have 'fear in the face of liberty', see section two below.

that opinion. But we can never say: all intelligence is equal… But our problem

isn't proving that all intelligence is equal. It's seeing what can be done under that

supposition. And for this, it's enough for us that the opinion be possible – that is,

that no opposing truth be proved.' (Ibid., 46)

Rather than attempting to prove that intelligence is equal, Rancière proceeds as if it were

true. [45] Partly this formulation goes to insure him against the charge of being a

'disciplinary master' who stultifies.[46] But it is not an ungrounded opinion either. If one

pays attention to the facts, Rancière thinks, there are good reasons to think we are equally

intelligent in his terms. Beyond the everyday observations he makes – such as the

learning of our native language – Rancière thinks we need to postulate equal intelligence

in order to explain how society is possible in the first place. We have already seen how

understanding in unequal, hierarchical situations – such as understanding an order –

presupposes a more basic equality. Extrapolating out from this singular example,

establishing a social hierarchical order depends on a certain understanding that must be

common to both parties. In this minimal sense, those taken to be inferior and those

taken to be superior are in fact equals.

Nevertheless, this is still presented as a postulation. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, he asserts:

The equality of intelligence is the common bond of humankind, the necessary

and sufficient condition for a society of men to exist… It is true that we don't

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[45] Indeed, this is essentially the method of equality: to proceed as if we are equally intelligent in this sense just outlined. It is deceptively simple, since proceeding on this assumption has many implications, as I discuss below.

[46] See part two below on stultification. Note it also allows him to deny he is committing a performative contradiction. For, to prove the equality of intelligence would be to undermine it: to presume there is a correct interpretation which can be explained to people who do not yet know.

know that men are equal. We are saying that they *might* be. This is our opinion, and we are trying, along with those who think as we do, to verify it. But we know that this *might* is the very thing that makes a society of humans possible.' (Ibid., 72-73)

Interestingly, Rancière claims here that the equality of intelligence is not only necessary to enable orders to function, but also *sufficient*. On this interpretation, the existence of equal intelligence is not only required for an unequal society to arise, but inevitably leads to it. This fits with Rancière's claims that equality cannot become a social or police principle: equality, on this interpretation, cannot be institutionalised. We have already seen how this has been challenged by certain sympathetic commentators in my discussion of May in chapter two.[47] Whatever the outcome of that discussion, however, it seems clear that if one does accept the premises, as Rancière does, then his claim might be stronger than he admits. For if equal intelligence is the necessary and sufficient condition for a society to arise, and given that we *do* live in a society of humans, then we may wonder how he can conclude only that equal intelligence 'might' exist. We may therefore wonder whether Rancière's hypothesis really escapes the charge of explanation himself. I will suggest in section four that this is one indication of the need for a more nuanced account of explanation.

Part Two: Emancipation and Stultification

As we have seen in the previous chapters, emancipatory action, in whatever form, starts for Rancière on the presupposition of equal intelligence. Indeed, as I show in my

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[47] See chapter two, part three.

discussion of the ignorant schoolmaster below, for intellectual emancipation Jacotot argued one need only believe in equal intelligence. But for Jacotot, it was only possible to be an emancipated individual within an unequal society (OSP: 84). This meant that acts of intellectual emancipation could, for Jacotot, have individual but no social consequences. No matter how many individuals emancipated themselves, he argued their acts would not lead to a more equal and emancipated society.[48] Neither intellectual emancipation nor the work of the ignorant schoolmaster could be institutionalised. Rancière's political work disagreed with Jacotot on this point insofar as he suggests there are *political* consequences of presuming equal intelligence (Ibid., 86).[49]

Rancière's account of political emancipation can therefore be considered to have developed out of Jacotot's account of intellectual emancipation. Political emancipation, as we have seen, requires political subjects to presuppose, act upon and test their equality – or more precisely equal intelligence in the sense defined above – before others. In cases where there is presumed to be no common understanding in the existing distribution, Rancière's political subject is able to 'deduce' her equality from the very workings of inequality. For instance, in understanding an order, she deduces her equality without which inequality – for example, the successful issuing of that order – 'can't function' (ME: 112). She then forces others to understand her speech *qua* speech through a political act.[50] In presupposing that one shares in that language, one is, for Rancière, potentially in a position to assert oneself as a speaker of that language and make one's

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[48] For a critique of Jacotot's individualism and its lingering traces in Rancière's work, see part three below on emancipatory networks.

[49] Indeed, I argued in chapter two that political action also has social consequences through egalitarian inscriptions in our laws and practices. I have therefore disagreed with Jacotot that it cannot have any social effects.

[50] See the introduction and chapter one, part two for a discussion of the three criteria for the appearance of a political subject. See chapter two, part four for a reconsideration of the three criteria in relation to the indigenous struggles analysed by Audra Simpson.

speech *count*. For Rancière, as a believer in equal intelligence, this is always a possibility, even if success is far from guaranteed.[51]

We can also see why Rancière often uses, as an alternative to 'equal intelligence,' the terminology of presupposing equality as a *speaking being*. Our 'power' for equal intelligence can be observed in exemplary fashion, as we have seen, in the acquisition of our first language. That is to say, for Rancière, in the very fact that we have learnt a language, we have already demonstrated equal intelligence since, as I have suggested, the power to search, find and translate into one's own words is required to learn that language. But, as Bingham and Biesta (2010) argue, the capacity of the political subject to force her speech to be verified by another and thereby change the distribution of the sensible is also best demonstrated by the acquisition of our first language. More precisely, they suggest the child's forced entry into language demonstrates the potential to make ourselves understood by another.[52] The child who has never spoken must gain for herself the status of a speaking being – a point they argue should be understood politically rather than psychologically (ibid., 57). They write:

> Learning one's own language is also [the] "most difficult [of apprenticeships]"
> because it entails the added intersubjective effort to insert oneself into a
> distribution of the sensible where previously speech had not existed… The child

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[51] In a notorious formulation, Rancière's declared that 'politics is rare' (D: 139). I suggest there is good reason to think politics is not as rare as Rancière claimed – as he himself perhaps indicated (FRM: 118). Despite the ever-present possibility of failure, it should still be conceived as 'forcing' since compulsion is involved.

[52] Indeed they argue that there is the figure of a child at the heart of Rancière's political theory. The figure of the child is imported from educational theory into political philosophy where it does not belong – through disciplinary blurring – and argue it is strange that so little attention has been paid to it, but suggest it perhaps takes a parent or an educational theorist to spot this child (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 55).

must force his or her will onto another in order to be understood in a way that reconfigures the distribution of the sensible. (Ibid., 59)

She acquires the status of a speaker at the same time as the words are understood (ibid., 62). There is not a strict equivalence between the child and the political subject, they note, since the child is expected to become a speaker whereas the political subject is not (ibid., 58). This would account for the far greater – if not universal – incidence of children being taken for speakers in comparison with the relatively low rate of success of political actors. Nevertheless, if we think of this child in political terms, we have all already forced ourselves into the world as speakers and, for Bingham and Biesta, this is the model for future insertions: as sharers in a common language who have already forced themselves into language once and potentially, as political subjects or intellectually emancipated subjects, can do so again.

Whereas Rancière's emancipatory actors start by deducing equality from understanding, for Rancière *stultification* occurs when one begins with the opposite deduction: the deduction of inequality. Yet as with all terminology in Rancière's work, we must be precise with what the term stultification does and does not imply. 'Stultify' is Kristin Ross' translation of the original French 'abrutir' which can also be translated as 'render stupid' or 'treat like a brute.'[53] As I will discuss in this section, explanation is, for Rancière, an exemplary 'stultifying' method. But one is not rendered stupid through explanation insofar as it is a poor method for transferring knowledge to another. On the

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[53] Ross used 'stultify' because it 'carries the connotations of numbing and deadening better than the word 'stupify,' which implies a sense of wonderment or amazement absent in the French.' (IS: 7n) There is perhaps an interesting comparison to be made between Freire's humanism and Rancière's: since both suggest oppressive pedagogy dehumanises or renders one like a brute. Freire's humanism is, however, of course much more substantial.

contrary, Rancière recognises that stultifying pedagogy can fill the student full of knowledge. More generally, Rancière is not opposed to the aim of 'transferring knowledge' through explanation to others. There are, of course, many things the child, and indeed all of us, have not yet learnt. If the aim is simply to transfer knowledge to another, then stultifying methods may well be entirely appropriate.

It is *only* the interlinking of explanation and emancipation to which Rancière objects. He objects, in other words, to the idea that transferring knowledge to another, and specifically transferring knowledge about conditions of inequality, can have emancipatory consequences. More precisely still, his thesis is that explanation cannot have emancipatory consequences only insofar as we understand emancipation as aesthetic emancipation: as moving out of place. The claim is that, in educational terms, stultifying education cannot result in intellectual emancipation; whilst in political terms, explaining the facts of domination cannot lead to political action in its specifically aesthetic form. This means that other forms of emancipation – which for Rancière would not count as emancipation but which, I have suggested, may still for us [54] – could result from stultifying methods: specifically, in relation to the discussion here, *any methods which utilise explanation.*

So why does explaining fail to result in aesthetic emancipation? For Rancière, it is because the *logic* of explanation *denies* the power of equal intelligence.[55] Specifically, for Rancière, explanation rests on a temporal division between those who understand now

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[54] For example, we might still argue that there is a need to understand domination which can lead to certain emancipatory practice. See an attempt to integrate these two features at the end of section four. For other instances of alternative, non-aesthetic forms of emancipation, see discussion of McCarthy in chapter one and Honneth in chapter two.

[55] Recall that equal intelligence is defined as 'the power to make oneself understood through another's verification' (ibid., 72). Note explanation does not destroy or reduce equal intelligence but simply denies it.

and those who do not understand yet. For Rancière, we must presume this division in order to see the need for explanation in the first place. Why would one explain to someone considered already able to understand?[56] But this temporal division returns us to a conception of intelligence which can be split or divided – specifically along these temporal lines.[57] This splitting, as we have seen, for Rancière, means it cannot be an *equal* power, possessed here and now by all speaking beings. But if we presume that we do not yet possess equal intelligence, then we cannot take it up in acts of intellectual and political emancipation for which, as we have seen, it is a prerequisite to presume our ability to speak and force our speech to be verified.

Due to their operation of different logics, it can also be seen that explanation does not *demonstrate* equal intelligence. Indeed, the explanation of equal intelligence is self-defeating insofar as explanation operates on a different logic to the demonstration of equal intelligence. The form or logic of the explanation – which seems to presume one does not yet understand – contradicts the content of the argument that understanding is always already available. Indeed, this is part of the problem of logically reconstructing this hypothesis through explanation and is the reason why so many of his sympathetic commentators start with an apologetic recognition of the difficulty of exploring his thought without 'explaining' his thought (see for example Citton, 2010: 25; Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 16). Rancière would not be surprised that people may not be convinced by such an explanation, which is probably another reason why he expends little energy trying to 'prove' it. For Rancière, equal education can only be shown in other ways: presumed, acted upon and verified in singular instances.

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[56] I challenge this account in part four below.

[57] It can also be seen to divide the intelligence in other ways, for example between the 'formed' mind of the schoolmaster and the 'unformed' minds of students (where 'formed' is connected to the French and German term *Formation*.)

Still, we might therefore think that whilst the contradictory logic of 'explaining equal intelligence' does not promote or encourage a belief in it, it does not actively work against it. Yet I want to argue that the consequences of stultifying educational practices can, in fact, also work against taking up the presupposition of equal intelligence. We can begin to understand this by examining how, for Rancière, explanation results in both dependency and grief. He writes:

> the child who is *explained to* will devote his intelligence to the work of grieving: to understanding, that is to say, to understanding that he doesn't understand unless he is explained to. (IS: 8)

There is grief presumably at the loss of belief in this fundamental ability we have all already demonstrated many times, for example when learning our mother tongue. In its place, one learns dependency on another's explanation in order to learn.[58] But this grief and this dependency should not be misunderstood. For one thing, installing dependency at the heart of learning does not rule out the possibility of the student becoming a schoolmaster, thereby crossing the supposed division from 'unformed' to 'formed' mind. This is a fact we can observe occurring every day and Rancière recognises it explicitly, writing '[l]ater [the pupil] can be an explicator in turn. He possesses the equipment'

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[58] According to Bingham and Biesta, this is one of the contradictions we find with critical pedagogy. This form of emancipatory work 'installs *dependency* at the heart of the 'act' of emancipation.' Similarly, it presupposes a 'fundamental *inequality* between the emancipator and the one to be emancipated' in terms of the knowledge required and who can perform the act of demystification. Both of these factors raise the question of when the dependency or inequality will actually disappear in the process. For how long should the oppressed feel gratitude to their emancipator: or could they 'perhaps have asked why they were not considered to be free in the first place?' (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 31) They also note a third contradiction: the fundamental distrust of the experiences of the oppressed. I return to this point in a discussion of the hermeneutics of suspicion below.

(IS:8).[59] This is possible because becoming a 'superior mind' is not, for Rancière, an act of emancipation.[60] Rather, 'what stultifies the "inferiors" stultifies the "superiors" at the same time. For the only verified intelligence is the one that speaks to a fellow-man capable of verifying the equality of their intelligence' (ibid., 39). On this picture, the stultifying schoolmaster is as unfree as the stultified student. Like Hegel's master who cannot receive recognition from the slave, the stultifying schoolmaster can no more have his intelligence 'verified' by an inferior student than the student's intelligence can be 'verified' by the stultifying schoolmaster. For Hegel, to give meaningful recognition we need to be equals; for Rancière, understanding each other *presupposes* that we are equal. Without this minimal equality, there can be no common understanding; and neither the intelligence of the supposed inferior nor the supposed superior can be *verified*.

Secondly, our attachment to superiority further means we should also not misunderstand the 'grief' we feel. For Rancière, this grief does not necessarily cause suffering. He writes:

> Don't ask if the little educated child suffers from this mutilation. The system's genius is to transform loss into profit. The child *advances*. He has been taught, therefore he has learned, therefore he can forget. Behind him the abyss of ignorance is being dug again. But here's the amazing part: from now on the ignorance is someone else's… The more he forgets, the more evident it is to him that he understands. The more intelligent he becomes, the more he can peer down from on high at those he has surpassed… This is the genius of the explicators: they attach the creature they have rendered inferior with the

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[59] Indeed, as a social model, this is a perfect way to reproduce the existing system with those who do well in the explanatory school system becoming explicators themselves.
[60] For Rancière, emancipation requires a belief in equal intelligence. See the discussion of the ignorant schoolmaster below.

strongest chains in the land of stultification – the child's consciousness of his own superiority.' (Ibid., 21-22)

On this picture, then, the student accepts their dependency on and inferiority to the schoolmaster and all others who display greater manifestations of intelligence as the necessary cost of their superiority to those further down the progressive ladder. Instead of the equal world of intelligence – an immeasurable force we all possess as sharers in a common language – one has been inserted into a hierarchy of intelligences. For Rancière, the acceptance of inequality is:

laziness in face of the infinite task equality demands, fear in face of what a reasonable being owes to himself. It is easier to *compare* oneself, to establish social exchange as that swapmeet of glory and contempt where each person receives a superiority in exchange for the inferiority he confesses to.' (Ibid., 80)

Jacotot/Rancière concludes that inequality is a 'primitive passion' (ibid.). There are, however, good reasons to think Rancière is not speaking in his own voice here. Elsewhere he rejects the idea we have a desire for equality since he does not wish to give a philosophical anthropology. It therefore seems extremely unlikely he is actually signing up to an anthropological claim about a desire for inequality (RoD: 111). Moreover, if we did have a *desire* for inequality, then the vexed question about why we take up politics is even more difficult to answer. Perhaps the best way to make sense of our supposed 'passion' for inequality is to translate it as a lack of courage. As Rancière writes: 'Stultification is not an inveterate superstition; it is fear in the face of liberty' (IS: 108).

This suggests ways in which stultifying teaching *actively discourages* us from taking up equal intelligence. It ties us, on this account, to a love of superiority and reinforces a lack of confidence. In another passage, Rancière adds that

> It is this word [understand] that brings a halt to the movement of reason, that destroys its confidence in itself, that distracts it by breaking the world of intelligence into two, by installing the division between the groping animal and the learned little man, between common sense and science. From the moment this slogan of duality is pronounced, all the perfecting of the ways of *making understood*, that great preoccupation of men of methods and progressives, is progress towards stultification. (Ibid., 8)

Here the same themes occur: affirming the splitting of the intelligence results in the destruction of confidence to use the power of equal intelligence. It also causes distraction, understood as a love of superiority which diverts us from our own search and puts a halt to the work of the intelligence. Stultification therefore not only ignores our power for equal intelligence; it can actively *work against our will to take it up*. However, for those who presuppose equality, stultification is not seen to have an effect on equal intelligence itself: which is not itself either reduced or destroyed. Given better circumstances, encouragement or sheer need, believers in equal intelligence must presuppose it can always be taken up again. But in the meantime, by negatively impacting our will to take it up, stultifying practices can be seen to work against aesthetic emancipation.

This, then, is the basis for a *critique* of stultifying pedagogies. On this interpretation, they fail not only to promote action undertaken on the presupposition of intelligence, but can

also actively discourage us from such acts. This, for Rancière, is the case for any method which starts from the presumption that one does not have the power to make oneself understood, right here and now, and that one does not share in the common language. But as I suggested above, this need not imply that the one presuming inequality is typically taken to be inegalitarian. Rather Jacotot's – and Rancière's – critique was directed explicitly against *progressive* methods. It was targeted against educationalists who aim explicitly to emancipate others through the explanation of knowledge and against social critics, most notably Althusser and Bourdieu, who sought to produce emancipation through theoretical explanations into processes of domination. In the rest of this chapter, I examine the implications and limitations of the critique of stultification firstly in conversation with critical pedagogies and then with social critique through an encounter with recent theorists of ideology critique in the Frankfurt School tradition.

Part Three: Rancière and Freire on Critical Pedagogy

In this section, I examine the consequences of Rancière's critique of stultification for educational practices. I focus specifically on critical pedagogies – those which aim explicitly at producing emancipatory effects – through an examination of the work of Paulo Freire.[61] The comparison allows us to see the radicality of Rancière's critique and the extent to which egalitarians might be seen as inegalitarian in their very commitment to equality. However, I will argue that, although Freire works with a commitment to a problematic form of explanation, Rancière's work is most useful in highlighting positive emancipatory practices missing from Freire's work rather than as a negative critique of the practices endorsed by Freire himself. Freire, I will further suggest, also points the way

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[61] See above for the reasons I turn to Freire.

to developing how we understand these positive practices. This means an examination of Freire enables us to see both the benefits and limitations of Rancière's account of equal intelligence and critique of stultification.

Indeed, in many ways, Freire's critical pedagogy can be seen to overlap with Rancière's account of equal intelligence. The former's critique of what he calls the 'banking system' model of education has much in common with the latter's account of 'stultifying' educational practices. Like Rancière, Freire rejects a view of education that takes the form of 'explaining' knowledge to passive students and decries the suppression of active intelligence. In the banking system, according to Freire, the aim is to 'deposit' knowledge into the students who are viewed as 'receptacles' to be 'filled' with the teacher's content (Friere, 2017: 45). He criticises a view of education in which the quality of a teacher can be judged by how well these receptacles are filled and the quality of students can be judged by how 'meekly' they permit themselves to be filled (ibid.). At the same time, he criticises how the banking system of education presents the world as fixed and unchanging, rather than posing it as a changeable entity and a problem with which the teacher and students alike are confronted (ibid., 49). According to Freire, 'everything in this ready-to-wear approach serves to obviate thinking' (ibid., 49).

Freire also rejects the hierarchical divisions set up by the banking system which, he argues, aim to keep people in their place for the benefit of the elites. In a passage sharply reminiscent of Rancière's critique, he writes:

> In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the

ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence – but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher.' (Ibid., 45)

Here too, then, there is a sharp and misleading divide created between the supposedly knowledgeable and the ignorant. The teachers and other elites 'project' an ignorance onto the oppressed, which they then seek to overcome through the benevolent disposition of knowledge into those they have just designated 'ignorant.' Like the 'gift' of Canadian citizenship which, as we saw in chapter two, is often bestowed upon indigenous communities to further the cause of liberal colonialism,[62] here too the price of the 'gift' is high. The projection of ignorance justifies the hierarchical relationship between oppressor and oppressed and the need for the education of the latter by the former. But it also maintains and strengthens the division, insofar as it prevents the oppressed from realising the – for Freire – fundamentally *mutual* pursuit of teaching and learning.

Yet already there are hints that, despite the many parallels, Freire conceives of this division differently to Rancière. For a start, the student 'never' discovers she teaches the educator.[63] The deduction of their mutual influence – or perhaps we might say equality – is not presented as deducible by her. This may be because, for Freire, the banking system

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[62] See chapter two, part two.
[63] However, as I suggest below, this can also be seen to parallel a limitation with Rancière's ignorant schoolmaster who likewise fails to be influenced, or emancipated, by the student.

'obviates' thinking itself and not simply the will to think. But it may also be because, on Freire's humanist picture, domination results in the *dehumanisation* of both oppressor and oppressed. He argues the oppressed have internalised the oppressor's view of them and developed a desire to emulate them (ibid., 22). As a result there is, for Freire, an oppressor consciousness lurking inside every member of the oppressed. On this account, domination has marked the subjectivity of the oppressed in a way which includes their capacities as agents and specifically as agents who think. Oppressive ideology, on this picture, impacts not simply the will of the student to keep going, but her capacity to think and understand.

Moreover, the dehumanisation of the oppressed means that, for Freire, no one can emancipate herself, at least not before the revolution. The hold of oppressive ideology, which lodges an oppressor in their heart of every oppressed consciousness, prevents such a course of action. For 'as long as they live in the duality' their contribution is 'impossible' (ibid., 22). He therefore argues the oppressed need to discover the 'secret' of their inequality, which is to say the fact of their dehumanisation, in order to liberate themselves. But this means reintroducing both the need for knowledge and a necessary temporal delay. The oppressed, on this picture, cannot emancipate themselves by themselves right here and now. Equality and emancipation are deferred.[64]

Nevertheless, this seems like an uncharitable reading of Freire. He does not fall back on a simple mode of explanation – of imparting knowledge of emancipation – in order to 'free' those dehumanised by oppression. For Freire, it is true that no one can emancipate

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[64] This is different to Rancière's account since, as I showed above, he argues domination might impact us in many ways but it does not reduce or destroy equal intelligence itself. Neither do we need an explanation of inequality in order to use our equal intelligence. In fact, for Rancière, this explanation potentially undermines it uptake.

herself, but equally no one can emancipate the other without her active participation, simply by 'filling' her with knowledge. Indeed, his rejection of the banking system means this option is not available to him. According to Freire, 'true humanists' must recognise 'they cannot use banking educational methods in the pursuit of liberation, for they would only negate that very purpose' (ibid., 51). Moreover, he argues that in order to emancipate the oppressed, the teacher cannot simply reject their lived experience. As he argues: 'One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding' (ibid., 68).[65]

Instead, he insists that the oppressed must be partners in and subjects of emancipatory pedagogical processes. Education can only produce freedom if individuals enter the process *qua* humans. He insists '[t]hey cannot enter the struggle as objects in order *later* to become human beings' (ibid., 42). This is strikingly similar to Rancière's demand that equality must be a starting point: that subjects cannot become equal through inequality.[66] Yet since oppression has *dehumanised* the oppressed, it is a central question for his approach how they could ever *enter* the process *qua* humans. Indeed, this is one of the key difficulties his pedagogy grapples with. As he writes:

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[65] As such, Freire can perhaps be seen to try to move beyond a 'hermeneutics of suspicion:' see section four below. On the other hand, there remain tensions in his work. For example, he writes: 'The leaders must believe in the potentialities of the people, whom they cannot treat as mere objects of their own action; they must believe that the people are capable of their own action; they must believe that the people are capable of participating in the pursuit of liberation. But they must always mistrust the ambiguity of oppressed people, mistrust the oppressor "housed" in the latter…. Although trust is basic to dialogue, it is not an a priori condition of the latter; it results from the encounter in which persons are co-subjects in denouncing the world, as part of the world's transformation' (Freire, 2017: 142).

[66] There is a perhaps an important difference, however, since presupposing equality for Rancière is a one off event whilst Freire's humanisation can be seen as a process.

The central problem is this: How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be "hosts" of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality in which *to be* is *to be like*, and *to be like* is *to be like the oppressor*, this contribution is impossible. The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanisation.' (Ibid., 22)

Freire's solution is to insist upon 'emancipating with' the oppressed. For Freire, '[a]uthentic education is not carried on by "A" *for* "B" or by "A" *about* "B," but rather by "A" *with* "B," mediated by the world' (ibid, 66). It is through problem-posing dialogue – rather than explanation – that the oppressed can become participants in liberation.

Nevertheless, we can still identify the limits of Freire's teacher-student through a comparison with the teacher figure in Jacotot/Rancière's account, the eponymous 'ignorant schoolmaster'. For, perhaps surprisingly in an account which emphasises self-emancipation, Biesta (2017) reminds us that Jacotot/Rancière still foresee an important role to be played by the teacher. Since our will stops wherever circumstance, need and desire stop, we may well need an emancipatory teacher to compel us on our way: a teacher who is, moreover, 'not a simple good-natured pedagogue' but an 'intractable master.' This is because '[t]he emancipatory commandment knows no compromises. It absolutely commands of a subject what it supposes it is capable of commanding of itself…' (IS: 38) Submitting to the will of the intractable master – whilst the intelligence obeys only itself – is one way to find the courage to persevere.

It is through his ignorance that the emancipatory teacher avoids stultification. He is ignorant in at least two senses: ignorant of the subject he teaches (OIS: 2)[67] and ignorant of the 'knowledge of inequality' (OIS: 4). Unlike the stultifying schoolmaster, the ignorant schoolmaster himself does not know what the student does not know or the best route for taking her there. He also does not explain why the student is unequal or ignorant, not least because he does not presume the student to be so.[68] Rather, the ignorant schoolmaster thinks there is 'nothing to know' about inequality since it is a starting point he rejects, rather than a state to be transformed.

Yet although he does not explain, the ignorant schoolmaster performs two crucial acts:

> He *interrogates*, he demands speech, that is to say, the manifestation of an intelligence that wasn't aware of itself or that had given up. And he *verifies* that the work of the intelligence is done with attention, that the words don't say just anything in order to escape from the constraint.' (IS: 29)

But how can one verify what one does not know? As we have seen, it is not important for Rancière *what* one finds but *that* one searches without distraction. The schoolmaster verifies that the other has searched, by continually demanding reasons for her conclusions. According to Jacotot, one can question the student's answers even (or perhaps especially) if one does not know the answers oneself, by identifying areas where the student has not 'paid attention' and cannot give a satisfactory answer to his

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[67] Since Jacotot knew the French language, he was therefore not an 'ignorant' schoolmaster in this sense. As such, he continued his experiment by turning to teaching subjects he *did not know*, such as the piano and Flemish litigation.
[68] Or at least, he does not presume the student to be any more ignorant than he considers himself.

demanding questions.[69] For Jacotot, the only qualifying criteria to be an ignorant schoolmaster is to 'know what seeking or researching means' which is to say, to *experience oneself* the operation of equal intelligence. This means that to 'emancipate someone else, one must be emancipated oneself' (ibid., 33).

By conceiving of the emancipatory schoolmaster as ignorant, we can locate the disagreement between Rancière and Freire. For despite the model of 'emancipating with', Freire's teacher still possesses various kinds of knowledge: of oppression, of dehumanisation, of the problems of the banking system and the model of problem-posing education, to name but a few. Moreover, she is following *Freire's explanation*. As Biesta argues, Freire:

> himself operates as a teacher, not only be telling (other) teachers what they should and should not do, but also be expressing strong claims about the allegedly true nature of human beings… the way in which Freire himself appears as a teacher shows that it is perhaps more difficult to escape from a banking mode of emancipatory education than Freire seems to believe. (2017: 59-60)[70]

Freire's teacher, then, is certainly no conventional banking system pedagogue, but neither has she entirely escaped the logic of explanation. To what extent this makes Freire vulnerable to Rancière's negative critique of stultification as inhibiting emancipation is a question I return to at the end of this section; but positively I suggest Rancière's account

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[69] See discussion of an example of such verification in section four below.

[70] It is a question whether Rancière avoids the same charge. Is his claim that equal intelligence is only a hypothesis enough to shield him from the accusation that he, too, 'explains' to others how emancipatory education should properly be conceived?

of the 'ignorant schoolmaster' allows us to identify alternative educational approaches aimed at producing aesthetic emancipatory consequences.

According to Tyson Lewis, the disagreement between Rancière and Freire can be identified in their respective theorisations of curiosity. He writes:

> the latter emphasises the consciously directed and deliberate work of education to awaken curiosity and connect it with proper objects while the former emphasises the contingencies of an embodied curiosity to pull and be pulled in unforeseen directions that escape the conscious intentionality of the subject. In short, *thinking accurately changes to sensing differently, and the educational goal shifts from consciousness-raising to perceptual alienation.* (Lewis, 2012: 102)

It is true that Freire's teacher does not seek to explain *the* route to emancipation which should rather be puzzled out by the teacher and student together in intersubjective dialogue. Nevertheless, she still works with a limited understanding of knowledge – of dehumanisation and the requirements of humanisation for instance – and aims, in that sense, at a form of 'consciousness-raising' which can be considered 'directed and deliberate'.

For Rancière, by contrast, there is no directed or deliberate work; rather the aim is 'perceptual alienation.' Here we can see parallels with the discussion of a Rancièrian politics of memory in chapter one. There I argued that identifying acts of aesthetic political emancipation in the past – where one did not expect them to be – could potentially increase the possibility of acting politically, on the presupposition of equality, in the present. As such, I argued his politics of memory was better understood as 'sense-

scrambling' than consciousness-raising. I suggest that such an account of sense-scrambling could be an example of what Lewis calls perceptual alienation. Of course, it might be objected that training someone to see 'politics' in a particular form is 'directed' rather than alienating. Yet this is only convincing if we forget that politics is defined as interruptions to our distribution of the sensible: acts which do not (yet) make sense. Politics, for Rancière, occurs where one does not expect to find politics and where, in advance, one could not predict politics to occur. It is therefore, I suggest, better understood as alienating than directed: teaching one to see *differently* rather than seeing *properly*.

Teaching people 'skills' for perceptual alienation seems to be a practice which could potentially be integrated into educational practices. Of course, for Jacotot and Rancière, this is impossible since emancipatory education cannot be institutionalised.[71] Yet even if we agree with them here – and of course, we may always disagree – we could still suggest that emancipatory practices could impact on schools and pedagogical practices in a non-institutionalised fashion through the work of 'egalitarian inscriptions'. Indeed, Bingham and Biesta make an explicit comparison with the police order to explore what 'better' schools might look like:

> it can be said that there are better and worse schools just as it can be said that there are better and worse police. But the better school will not be the one whose programs and policies are more effective than the program and policies of the

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[71] Rancière writes explicitly: 'If I thought it good to revive this forgotten discourse [of Jacotot's], it is not, to repeat, in order to propose some new pedagogy. There is no jacotist pedagogy. Nor is there a jacotist anti-pedagogy, in the sense that this word is ordinarily used. In brief, jacotism is not an educational idea that one could apply to systemic school reform' (OIS: 14). Indeed, the last chapter of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* recounts the failures to institutionalise Jacotot's methods.

worse. The better school will be the one that is porous to the incursion of intellectual emancipation. (OIS Translator's Afterword: 24)

If acts of intellectual emancipation leave behind egalitarian inscriptions, which here would most likely take the form of inscriptions in our practices, then those attending or working within 'better schools' might be viewed as having greater sensitivity to perceptual alienation and to be more open to further incursions of equality. There may, for instance, be exemplars – to draw on our discussion of Norval[72] – who inspire and motivate the take up of equal intelligence in both educational and political practices. As such, more tools for perceptual alienation may be available within those 'better' schools, even if this does not result from the work of an officially endorsed pedagogy.

Yet whilst Rancière's positive emancipatory projects – the work of the ignorant schoolmaster and perceptual alienation – usefully point beyond Freire's pedagogical approach in order to actively promote the uptake of aesthetic emancipation, the latter's stipulation of the need to 'emancipate with' also raises a counter question for Rancière. Specifically, why do we need to imagine emancipatory education taking place within the individualistic, uni-directional master-student framework? If the emancipatory schoolmaster gives us motivation and courage to continue in the face of fear, why must this be imagined on a hierarchical model?[73] Ruth Sonderegger has also helpfully written in this regard. She argues Rancière's 'irritating insistence on individual emancipation' comes from his reliance on Jacotot. She continues:

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[72] See chapter two, section four.

[73] It may not be hierarchical in terms of superior-inferior intelligence, but it remains hierarchical for Jacotot/Rancière in relation to the will (because the student submits to the will of the teacher) and the direction of emancipation (because the student is emancipated by the teacher and not vice-versa).

The only interaction Jacotot mentions, and indeed highlights, is the one-way street of encouragement that leads from the teacher to the pupil in cases where the pupil's individual will is not strong enough. An indication of this one-way street might be the fact that Jacotot, to my knowledge, never let himself be encouraged to learn Flemish. (Sonderegger, 2014: 61)

By limiting himself to Jacotot's individualistic picture, the role of the ignorant schoolmaster as conceived by Rancière is also limited to individual, one-directional forms of emancipation. What is missing from this account is the potential mutuality of emancipatory action. To paraphrase Freire's critique in a new context, *the student never learns she too emancipates the teacher.*

Indeed, I suggest that this uni-directional model of emancipation is neither realistic nor sustainable. Recall that the condition for being an ignorant schoolmaster is that he himself be emancipated, which is to say, that he believes in the equality of intelligence. But is the belief in equal intelligence best conceived as a one-off and permanent event? If the temptation to inequality is as strong as Rancière and Jacotot claim, then the solitary ignorant schoolmaster becomes a lonely superhero, not dissimilar to theoreticians Rancière rejects.[74] In fact, as Sonderegger proposes:

the emancipated need actual demonstrations of emancipation – particularly where they least expect such demonstration. In other words: emancipated subjects need others who allow encouragement to happen and emancipate themselves with the help of such encouragement. Otherwise even Jacotot's followers risk losing their faith… (Ibid., 60-61)

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[74] See discussion of Althusser, in particular Althusser's Marx, below.

Sonderegger, here, is suggesting that intellectual emancipation not only can, but in a sustainable, non-heroic fashion *must,* take place within emancipatory networks. This is because it is not only the student who needs her courage and motivation to be propelled. Rather, the teacher – who may perhaps now be conceived as an ignorant 'teacher-student' – also needs her equal intelligence to be verified. She also needs the acts of others to give her the courage to maintain her faith in equal intelligence. Such a network need not – indeed perhaps cannot – be institutionalised in any fixed way; it may well remain precarious and experimental. It also need not necessarily be conceptualised as a 'sphere of equality' but simply a loose, open, exploratory network of individuals who motivate and propel each other to continue using their equal intelligence and verify each other's acts.

I have suggested then that Rancière, supplemented with insights from Freire, gives us a model of *positive* educational practices, which need not be considered institutionalisable pedagogies, to promote aesthetic emancipation. This would also help us move beyond the method of explanation which, as I have shown, can still be located in Freire's work. However, does the lingering presence of explanation in Freire leave him equally vulnerable to the *negative* critique of stultification? Should we not only attempt to supplement Freire's work with overlooked strategies, but more fundamentally reject his practices on the basis of their complicity with a stultifying logic: as working actively against emancipation?

In the fourth section below, I suggest that the critique of stultification need not result in such a rejection. On the one hand, one might wonder whether Rancière's 'hypothesis' of equality is really enough to protect him from the counter-accusation that he, too, has

explained the logic of emancipation and stultification. This is particularly the case given the problematic status of his 'hypothesis' that I identified at the end of part one. Rather than searching for an ever-more radical account 'pure' of all explanation, I suggest we in fact need a more nuanced account of explanation. Specifically, we need to consider more critically what an explanation actually presupposes. If I explain to another, am I always presuming that I know the truth, that they do not know the truth and, moreover, that they need my explanation in order to come to know it? I argue that, with a more nuanced account of explanation, we might be able to maintain the critique of stultification in many cases without endorsing some of its more extreme or absurd conclusions.

To explore this final question, I turn from considering emancipatory education in pedagogical practice to its role as critical social theory.[75] This is because, as I suggested above, a more nuanced account of the problems of explanation can indeed be located in Rancière's critique of Althusser's ideology critique.[76] By considering this critique, we are able to locate more precisely the problematic assumptions surrounding *certain* types of explanations. But this allows us to see that, whilst many explanations are problematic for emancipatory practices, not *all* forms of explanation necessarily contain these assumptions. I demonstrate this by considering a recent account of ideology critique developed by Frankfurt School theorist Rahel Jaeggi and an account of critical social

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[75] As I suggested in the introduction, critical social theory also faces Rancière's accusation of stultification due what he terms its 'demystifying' aim. This means that one attempts to 'reveal' the truth of the other's 'real' condition (a condition of oppression) in order to work towards emancipation. But, for Rancière, as we can guess by now, in aiming to demystify the other, we can be seen to deny their equal intelligence: their ability to understand without explanation right here and now. As such, it can be seen to keep people in their place: both in failing to encourage aesthetic emancipation and, potentially, actively discouraging such practices through the effects of dependency and distraction it produces on the will. If this can be upheld, it would have serious consequences for my claim that some forms of Frankfurt School theory can be (precariously) complementary to Rancière's work, since the former would potentially undermine the activity of the latter.

[76] It can also be found in the critique of Bourdieu, although I do not pursue this here.

theory developed by her colleague Robin Celikates. I argue that they allow us to move towards a form of ideology critique which can avoid the stultifying consequences which, as we saw in section two, result from other forms of explanation.[77]

Part Four: Explanation, Stultification and Ideology Critique

There are three features of Althusserian ideology critique which Rancière highlights for criticism and which can help us identify the more specific problems associated with certain forms of explanation. [78] The first is its all-pervasive, totalising nature. For Althusser, ideology is a necessary, if illusionary, feature of every society which creates the bonds that hold that society together (Althusser, 1977: 232). For Althusser, ideology has always already interpellated us as subjects: to be a subject in the first place, one has always already been subjected by ideology:

> The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing… [W]hat thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one

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[77] Whether such an option is available to Freire is unclear. His strong conviction, and lessons in, humanism as well as his method of emancipatory teaching, may mean his 'explanations' cannot be seen to take the form of tentative hypotheses which I will advocate in section four. But I suggest it at least leaves open the possibility that Freirian teachers, depending on the specific presumptions behind the real-life explanatory practices of Freirian teachers, may be able to avoid the potential stultifying effects of their explanations on the will.

[78] Note this is neither to claim that Rancière gets Althusser right not to endorse the critique. It is simply to locate the problematic nature of explanation more precisely without claiming Althusser himself cannot be defended from the particular charges Rancière raises.

of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology. (Althusser, 2008: 49)

According to Althusser, we are already in ideology before we are born (ibid., 50); always subjected to it to become a subject at all. Yet we do not know it and cannot know it. Indeed denying our ideological condition *is* the character of ideology. We live, as such, in a state of illusion regarding our true condition. Notice in particular how ideology is also located, specifically, in the street. That is where we find Althusser's policeman who, in calling out 'hey, you there,' functions as the paradigmatic example of interpellation (ibid., 48).[79] But the 'street' can also be read as the place of protest: the place where the students and workers were found in May '68. According to Althusser, the protestors were under the illusion that they are acting outside of 'bourgeois' ideology when in fact they are firmly located within it.

Yet Althusser offers hope against the totalising character of ideology. The second move which Rancière rejects is to oppose science to ideological illusion. Yet the route to science is strictly undialectical for Althusser since science stands fully outside ideology. He writes:

Hegelian supersession presupposes that the later form of the process is the 'truth' of the earlier form. But Marx's position and his whole critique of ideology implies on the contrary that science (which apprehends reality) constitutes *in its very meaning* a *rupture* with ideology and that it sets itself up in another terrain, that it

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[79] By contrast, Rancière's police is not a law which interpellates individuals but 'consists, before all else, in recalling the obviousness of what there is, or rather or what there is not, and its slogan is "Move along! There's nothing to see here!"' (DIS: 37) See discussion of the concept of police in the conclusion below.

constitutes itself on the basis of new questions, that it raises other questions about reality than ideology, or what comes to the same thing, it defines its object differently from ideology. Therefore science can by no criteria be regarded as the truth of ideology in the Hegelian sense. (Althusser, 1977: 78n.)

Working from the premises of ideology, one can only reach ideological conclusions. This sounds uncannily like Rancière's position on equality and is testament to their common rejection of Hegel. Of course, for Rancière, anyone can change their starting point. For Althusser, by contrast, only a select few can make the break. This is because Althusser, following Bachelard, describes the move from ideology to science as an *epistemological break.*

Moving from ideology to science, on the Althusserian picture, seems to require a gargantuan effort. It is, as Rancière says, laced with irony, the 'heroic investigations of the solitary theoretician' (AL: 75). [80] The paradigmatic case for Althusser is Marx's epistemological break. Before 1845, Althusser argues, the 'Young Marx' was still steeped in ideological humanism. This epistemological break divides Marx's thought into the 'ideological' period of the Young Marx and the 'scientific' period after the break, [81] although Althusser suggests it took many years before the scientific Marx had produced a satisfactory terminology and method for his new science. For Althusser, it is only by identifying the break and reading Marx in light of it that we can correctly interpret his thought, particularly in this transitional period.

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[80] This is my suggested parallel with the solitary and heroic believer in equal intelligence, the ignorant schoolmaster, personified by Jacotot and perhaps Rancière himself.

[81] According to Althusser, Marx himself correctly announced this break in the *German Ideology*: 'we resolved… to settle accounts with our erstwhile philosophical conscience' (Althusser, 1977: 32).

But for Rancière the ultimate point of postulating an epistemological break is not to offer a correct interpretation of Marx. Rather, Rancière argues the break functions as a 'gatekeeper' which is intended to keep the masses – who have been condemned to the world of ideology – safely outside of science. It also aims to keep them in their correct place in relation to politics as well: under the instruction of the Marxist scientist.[82] As he argues:

> [t]he concept of science now appears in its true light: the science/ideology distinction ultimately had no other function than to justify the pure being of knowledge – more accurately, to justify the eminent dignity of the possessors of knowledge.' (OTI: 154)

Just like the stultifying schoolmaster and the teacher in the banking system, whose 'knowledge of ignorance' is designed to keep the oppressed in their place and thereby ensure their own superior position, Rancière suggests the knowledge possessed by the scientist as a result of the epistemological break is designed to maintain the position and prestige of the latter.

These two features – the ubiquity of deceptive ideology and the epistemological break between science and ideology – lead Althusser to a suspicion of the words of others. We can ignore the 'noise in the street' if it is dismissed as ideological and misguided. Rather,

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[82] Althusser famously condemned the student movement during May '68 (see in particular Althusser, 2011). The statement on pedagogy which Althusser makes in this articles is exemplary of the pedagogical approach Rancière rejects – and which he perhaps extends illegitimately to other approaches. For instance, '[t]he pedagogic function has as its object the transmission of a determinate knowledge to subjects who do not possess it. Therefore the pedagogic situation is based on the absolute condition of *an inequality between a knowledge and a lack of knowledge'* (ibid., 14). Or, 'No pedagogic questions, which all presuppose unequal knowledge between teachers and students, can be settled on the basis of *pedagogic equality* between teachers and students' (ibid.).

for Althusser, what the masses *really* need to secure their emancipation is the science of intellectuals. In the case of Marx, meanwhile, we have seen that, for many years, he was required to use old concepts for new purposes. Distinguishing concept from purpose requires 'a major critical effort' on the part of the philosopher, who must also understand that, after the epistemological break, a brand new vocabulary did not come into force at once (Althusser, 1977: 37). This means that one cannot take Marx's words at face value; rather, those who have escaped ideological illusion are required to interpret what his words *really* mean.[83]

Central to Althusser's theory, then, Rancière locates a distrust of words. An enlightened critic, no longer in the thrall of ideology, is needed to correctly interpret Marx and censure the words of the ideologically confused in the street. According to Rancière:

> Althusser remains hostage to an old metaphysical notion according to which 'ideological' power is exercised through the subversion of vision. Words, for him, are not the elements of discursive practices that are, in turn, articulated to different social practices. They are representations of existing conditions. As a result, they only allow the following division: on the one side are the words that represent bourgeois domination (man, rights, freedom), and on the other are the

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[83] We should note that these two features are equally at play in Rancière's other great opponent, Pierre Bourdieu. The first – the ubiquity of illusionary ideology is found in Bourdieu's theory of habitus. Habitus works as an ideology in two different ways. On the one hand, it enables the reproduction of society, in the same (totalising) way as Althusser identified. On the other, habitus – like ideology – is invisible (or unseeable) by those enthralled to it and can only be analysed, and eventually revealed to them, through the work of the sociological observer (Celikates, 2014: 129). Secondly, he operates with a methodological commitment to a radical break between the perspective of the participant and the perspective of the 'scientific' observer (ibid., 131). According to Celikates, 'Bourdieu's identification of the task of sociology – to tear off the veil which dissembles (to the actors) an objective view of the deep structures of society – appears as such as an exemplary case of a "hermeneutic of suspicion"' (ibid., 131, own translation).

words forged *elsewhere*, that is, in scientific knowledge (masses, classes, process, and so on). This division gives to philosophers the power to be the word-keepers. But it also confines that power to being the power of *censure*… where workers insist on using the words of the bourgeoisie. (AL: 95)

Since the words of those trapped in ideology can only reflect their ideological beliefs, Rancière argues that words for Althusser can only 'represent' social conditions. In other words, what it is possible for people to think and say is limited by their position. Any words which appear to break out of this location – words of disagreement for instance – are subject to interpretation by the theorist to show what they really meant. This can therefore be seen as an example of what Ricoeur called a 'hermeneutics of suspicion': a critical technique aimed at decoding disguised meanings in a text. Operating with a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' – explaining what an other *really* means, often despite herself – is the third aspect of Althusser's ideology critique which Rancière rejects.

In particular, he rejects a metaphor utilised by the hermeneutics of suspicion. It is the idea that the 'truth' is hidden from sight and that the meaning of the words lies somewhere 'beneath' them. Ideology, on this picture, is exercised through the 'subversion of vision' (ibid.). The critical task, in this case, is to reverse the subversion. It is to bring to light what could not be seen: the real meaning of words and the correct way of viewing the world. This is the job which, according to Rancière, the tradition of critique in general, including critical theory, gives to itself:

[If] words always hide something profound below the surface [then] the hermeneutic imperative is thus to examine these substrata of meaning in order to

get at some even more profound secret. In most cases, such a "profound secret" is, in fact, an instance of domination either imposed or endured… (DW: 114)

Emancipation, on this picture, consists in revealing this hidden secret which the addressee *cannot know or see*.[84] By contrast, as we have seen, it is Rancière's relationship to hearing and not interpreting *the words of others* which best encapsulates his position. Throughout his work, Rancière maintains his refusal to speak for others – to represent them – as was demonstrated in exemplary fashion by the egalitarian 'recounting' rather than interpreting of Jacotot's work. Rancière therefore rejects representation in two senses: the idea that words represent the social conditions from which they emerge, and the idea that people need to be represented – spoken for, interpreted – by others.

We can thus summarise his objection to Althusserian ideology as follows. Firstly, Rancière opposes forms of ideology which are all-pervasive, from which there is no escape. Secondly, he opposes the idea of an epistemological break, where only a few privileged actors have access to the 'truth' of science and the rest are condemned to living in an ideology they can neither see nor comprehend. Finally, he rejects the consequences of the previous two conditions: that one should approach the words of the 'ideologically enthralled' suspiciously, using the methodology of a hermeneutics of suspicion, with the aim of revealing the disguised meaning behind those words.

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[84] Biesta and Bingham argued this was the third contradiction of critical pedagogy, 'the fact that although emancipation takes place in the interest of those to be emancipated, it is based upon a fundamental *distrust* of and *suspicion* about their experiences. The logic of emancipation dictates that we need someone else to tell us what it is that we are really experiencing and what our problems really are' (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 32). As we have seen, Freire tries to break out of this position but it is not clear he succeeds in holding onto both valuing their experiences and mistrust.

On such an account of ideology, one can see how the presumptions Rancière attributes to explanation in general hold. The scientist needs to explain to the masses, since they do not and cannot know without her intervention. If I am trapped in ideology I have no access to the truth myself without the guidance of a learned other. My words cannot be trusted to express the truth and can only ever represent my delusion of the situation in which I find myself. But as we have seen, claiming I cannot understand without explanation, for Rancière, denies my equal intelligence: that I can insert myself as a speaker into the common world, right here and now. If I were to presume my equality and perform such an act – as the students did in '68 – it also gives the other reason to reject those words as the words of one deluded by ideology. In this, and other cases where the presumptions of explanations hold, I suggest we can see how the inhibiting features of stultification on my will apply.

The question is, however, whether we can legitimately and helpfully transfer such presumptions to all forms of explanation. Specifically, do we necessarily see such presumptions underlying all explanations of inequality given with the intention of producing emancipatory results? To explore this question, I turn to a more recent formulation of ideology critique produced a thinker associated with the Frankfurt School, Rahel Jaeggi, supplemented by the critical social theory of Robin Celikates. Both of these thinkers are interesting for my purposes since they specifically attempt to deal with the elitist and potentially inegalitarian reputation of ideology critique. I will suggest that, by exploring Jaeggi's and Celikates' accounts, we can understand explanation in a more nuanced way which enables it to escape from the critique of stultification.

I begin with Jaeggi, who explicitly attempts to rescue a conception of ideology critique as *false consciousness*. The notion of false consciousness has long been associated with the

Frankfurt School but identifying what, precisely, is 'false' about false consciousness has always been a tricky task. Jaeggi attempts to solve this puzzle using Adorno's insight that 'truth and untruth are always entwined' (Jaeggi, 2009: 66). Essentially, she argues that ideologies are both true and false, but insofar as they are false, they work to conceal and undermine the way in which they are true. For example, Marx's analysis of the ideology of freedom and equality picks up on the truth that, in some sense, workers and employers meet each other on the market as free and equal partners. Strictly speaker, no one compels the worker to work for a given capitalist: she is no longer a serf. But at the same time, the worker's freedom and equality is extremely limited, particularly in relation to the capitalist, given the material compulsion to sell her labour power on the market in order to survive. The worker's belief that she is free is therefore, in a certain sense, both true and false but its truth works to conceal its falsity. But this is not all since, as Jaeggi suggests, its truth as embodied in the labour contract in fact generates further inequality and works to produce 'a new, if hidden, way of being unfree and exploited' (ibid., 68). This language of freedom and exploitation also points towards the fact that, for Jaeggi, falsity has both an epistemic and a normative dimension. She argues that '[i]deology critique reveals that we mis*understand* something (the conditions and the state of society) *and* that it *is* wrong' (ibid: 69). A critique of ideology, then, attempts not just to reveal and rectify the epistemic mistakes we are making, but it also aims at the emancipatory alteration of the 'wrong' situation.

Now, any account of false consciousness is clearly problematic from Rancière's standpoint. The former accepts that, to some extent and in some way, our consciousness is deceived as to its true condition. On this basis, theorists suggest that a 'revelation' of this 'hidden' truth of inequality can have, or at least prompt us to make, emancipatory changes in our life. As Shelby writes, for instance:

ideologies perform their social operations by way of illusion and misrepresentation. What this means practically is that were the cognitive failings of an ideology to become widely recognised and acknowledged, the relations of domination and exploitation that it serves to reinforce would, other things being equal, subsequently become less stable and perhaps even amenable to reform. (Shelby, 2003: 174)

That is, by explaining this hidden truth – revealing a state of inequality or unfreedom where we didn't take it to be – the theorist can contribute to the realisation of genuine freedom and equality for the oppressed.

But this means that words cannot always be taken at face value and Jaeggi accepts that ideology critique in this tradition:

is always based on a form of the hermeneutics of suspicion. Where it uncovers distortions in the individuals' understanding of the world and themselves, as well as in the self-understanding of social entities, it operates with certain reservations regarding the self-interpretation of social entities and individuals, and also regarding the individuals' prima facie interests. (Jaeggi, 2009: 65)

Jaeggi argues a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' must retain its 'suspicion' insofar as we 'break with the privilege of interpretation of those concerned' since 'to point out the mechanisms of "decontestation" and naturalization obviously requires a break with a perception of oneself and the world that has become second nature' (ibid., 80). Quite simply, if people can be seen to suffer from false consciousness, then we cannot always

rely on the testimony of others. This seems to immediately rule out any reconciliation with Rancière. After all, his relationship to the words of others rejects the idea that others can interpret what they *really* mean.

Yet *even if we accept the presupposition of equality*, are there sometimes good reasons to suspect the words of others? Does the ignorant schoolmaster himself not sometimes approach certain words with caution? For instance, as we saw, he does not accept that every interpretation is as good as any other. This 'intractable master' demands high standards when verifying that the other has 'paid attention' while searching. In situations where the student has not searched sufficiently, he points out what the other had overlooked; he refuses to accept the excuse 'I can't!' Jacotot/Rancière gives the following example of the ignorant schoolmaster's method at work:

> [The locksmith] doesn't even know the alphabet. Let him take the time to glance at the calendar. Doesn't he know the order of the months and can't he thus figure out January, February, March. He knows how to count a little. And what's to prevent him from counting softly while following the lines in order to recognise in written form what he already knows? He knows he is called William and that his birthday is January 16th. He will soon know how to find that word. He knows that February has only twenty-eight days. He sees that one column is shorter than the others and he will recognise "28." And so on. *There is always something that the master can ask him to find*, something about which he can question him and thus verify the work of his intelligence. (IS: 28-29, *emphasis added*)

Whilst the locksmith could potentially always use the method to teach himself, as we have seen the ignorant schoolmaster's intervention might be needed to verify he has used

his intelligence, in particular by pointing out facts to which he has not paid attention. For example, he identifies facts which contradict his 'words' and in so doing, he *redirects* attention to these facts. There is, after all, 'always something that the master can ask him to find'.

Of course, if the master is truly ignorant, then he is not pointing out prior knowledge. He is not returning to a form of Socratic 'elicitation,' where he points the student towards a knowledge the teacher already had in advance. In short, he is pointing out a lack of attention rather than a lack of knowledge, to be corrected by the student's renewed attention rather than a new piece of knowledge. Thus whilst he 'redirects' the locksmith's attention, this can still be interpreted as perceptual alienation rather than directed and deliberate consciousness-raising. The question is, however, whether 'pointing out' facts to which we have not properly paid attention is always so different to 'pointing out' unacknowledged instances of inequality, if 'knowledge' of inequality is presented as tentative, hypothetical, and the starting point for a discussion to be continued?

I suggest this points towards the need to reconsider whether distrusting words is necessarily inegalitarian. After all, even Jacotot/Rancière argue that the student's protest 'I can't' should not be taken at face value. For Rancière, the motivation for expressing 'I can't' is laziness or fear: one could keep searching, but is too frightened or lazy to do so. But are our words not often affected by other factors than our intelligence? According to Shelby:

> It is a mundane fact about human beings that we are sometimes prompted to accept beliefs by motives that have little to do with a concern for truth or

justification… we sometimes believe things because to do so would, say, bolster our self-esteem, give us consolation, lessen anxiety, reduce cognitive dissonance, increase our self-confidence, provide cathartic relief, give us hope, or silence a guilty conscience. When these and other noncognitive motives are psychologically operative, we easily fall into epistemic error. (Shelby, 2003: 171)

We can make errors for a wide range of reasons, not simply a failure to use our understanding. Could we not distrust another's words, then, due to a suspected unjustifiable motivation behind them, without casting doubt on their ability to understand? There are, then, I suggest reasons to distrust the words of others which do not rely on claims that the other could not understand or necessarily need knowledge to come to understand. Rather, compelling the other to pay better attention to their own motives seems a more appropriate response. As such, we should conclude that distrusting words is not necessarily opposed to presupposing equal intelligence.

Can we develop this insight to support Jaeggi's claims that a hermeneutics of suspicion is not necessarily inegalitarian?[85] Reaching this conclusion depends on a rejection of the other two criteria found in Althusser. Firstly, she argues against a totalising picture of ideology. She offers a critique of particular ideological formations rather than an account of 'being in ideology as such'. Jaeggi argues that 'the critique of ideology must point to the difference between a necessary imprint and a distortion, which the traditions of ideology theory from Althusser to Butler does not, since it tends to understand every formation as inevitable and yet also as restrictive' (2009: 73) This means that, for her,

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[85] Celikates, by contrast, rejects the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' but on the basis that it is associated with an epistemological break. By contrast, he notes his approach is reconcilable with immanent approaches (presumably like Jaeggi's) which also reject this break (Celikates, 2006: 22, n5.).

ideology is not totalising in the same way as it was for Althusser, where we were always already interpellated by ideology as the condition for being a subject.

Nevertheless, we might ask to what extent a *particular* constellation allows subjects to see beyond it? Could a *particular* ideology – though not a fundamental condition of subjecthood – not still be totalising to those within that society? But not only does this picture look unconvincing in today's globalised world, it is also undermined by Jaeggi's insistence on locating the starting point for ideology critique in the contradictions and crises of a given regime. Such contradictions and crises always render a given constellation unstable and vulnerable to criticism. Celikates supplements Jaeggi's work here by arguing that:

> Since social arrangements can, however, not be maintained by force alone but depend for their stability on a belief in their legitimacy and thus on the availability of some justification they make themselves vulnerable to a critique that questions the ideological character of these justifications and their normative credentials. Social arrangements can therefore never totally immunise themselves against critique... The idea of an "all-encompassing ideology" – a "totaler *Verblendungszusammenhang*" – thereby loses all meaning. Ideologies are always heterogeneous and operate locally, even if they present themselves as totalities without an outside – and can therefore always be subjected to critique. (Celikates, 2006: 35)

On this picture, ideologies are always potentially subject to critique due to their function of justifying an inherently unstable, incomplete ideology.

Moreover, for Jaeggi and Celikates, there is no position within a given society from which we must presume such a critique cannot take place. This reflects their rejection of the second feature of Althusserian ideology: the sharp distinction between science and ideology and the need to postulate an epistemological break. For Jaeggi, the position of the scientific observer is not external to the ideology she is criticising. She argues for an immanent critique according to which there is no standpoint outside of a given constellation or, as Celikates argues, 'a standpoint outside practice' (ibid., 30). As such, 'the critic is not separated from the ideology he or she criticizes (and the persons subject to it) but is "part of the always already ongoing social process of self-understanding"' (Jaeggi, 2009: 80).

There are at least two important points here. Firstly, the viewpoint of the other is not dismissed or explained away.[86] Rather, Jaeggi's ideology critique attempts to reconstruct the perspective of the insider. Ideology critique, she writes, is comparable to 'the psychoanalytic process, [which] would not be possible without the participation of the very position it criticizes (and its protagonists)' (ibid. 80). It does not enforce an interpretation upon them, but works from within the reconstruction itself. Of course, it does not simply accept these views: it works from within to 'purify' them of distortions. But this process, for Jaeggi 'is challengingly understood as part of the (self-) dissolution of a constellation of delusion and deception' (Jaeggi 2009: 80). The theorist does not stand over and apart from the oppressed in society: she is both critic and participant. On the model of ideology critique offered by Jaeggi, the critic is offering one voice attempting the 'self-dissolution' of delusion, working from the crises and contradictions of the given reality. If ideology is not total, and there is no external position for 'science',

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[86] This addresses the third criticism made by Biesta of critical pedagogies: that is it based on a mistrust of the other's experiences.

but rather only contradictions and crises within a reality point which point towards its ideological nature, why should we presume that the ideology is something that those 'enthralled' to it *cannot* see?

Secondly, as Celikates argues, there is no fundamental break between the knowledge/skills of the social theorist and the knowledge/skills of the agents involved. Celikates starts by arguing for the continuity of the skills used by the critic with the skills used by agents within society:

> [O]ne obviously does not have to be a professional sociologist in order to exercise one's capacity to articulate oneself, to reflect on what one is doing, and to defend the reasons one is acting on against criticisms as well as to criticise others for what they believe and do. Agents do not only do and think what they are doing and thinking, but they are able to relate to what they and others are doing and thinking either critically or affirmatively. Of course they do not always reflect on and justify what they are doing, but they are in principle capable of doing so and actually do so quite regularly in everyday situations of crisis and conflict, i.e. when a situation is experienced and interpreted as problematic by themselves or by relevant others. They do not have to be fully autonomous and self-transparent in order to be able to do so. (Celikates, 2006: 30)

On this interpretation, the skills used by the sociologist or critical theorist are widely available, every day skills. In some ways, Celikates is expressing an almost Rancièrian faith in capability.[87]

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[87] However, he is more nuanced in considering how capacities can be inhibited by processes of domination (Celikates, 2014: 142). As I have suggested, this may not be

If one starts from this position, Celikates suggests, there is no need to postulate an epistemological break. Since agents can – and should – be assumed to possess quite complex cognitive capacities, Celikates advocates a "principle of symmetry" between sociological and ordinary knowledge (ibid., 32). As for Jaeggi, there is no radical break between 'science' and the knowledge of ordinary people. On this picture, critique is a 'specific regime of action and justification among others' (ibid., 34). Critique can then be seen to take place in ordinary situations of conflict and dispute. Ideology critique becomes one practice among many others of critique which take place every day amongst ordinary citizens. This means there is no reason to aim for a critique which could be seen as impartial and in principle acceptable to anyone: it suffices to have justifications which could be seen as 'good enough' and adequate to the situation.

Of course, the theorist's voice is not simply one amongst many. Celikates admits his theory does not determine who is right in a given situation. His 'optimistic version' imagines a 'Taylor-style critical dialogue in which the critic tries to convince her interlocutors that if they understand themselves correctly, they would have to drop the specific view she denounces as ideological,' although he recognises this is not always possible (ibid., 34). But this could be problematic in two directions. Some might make the entirely un-Rancièrian objection that this means there is no longer a distinction between critique and ordinary practices. Celikates argues this distinction does not entirely disappear due to the theorist's 'advantage of professionalization, i.e. the means and environment to develop her critical capacities and exercise them without some of the

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relevant to Rancière who can accept that a great many capacities are indeed inhibited. The only capacity which cannot, he argues, is equal intelligence: the power to search, find and translate, in short to understand in the Rancièrian sense where understanding has been disconnected from correct interpretation.

constraints of normal practice' (ibid., 36). But this response leads to the second, counter worry, that the theorist's voice will never be one amongst many: that their professional status will always make their arguments more valuable, more sophisticated, more convincing in the eyes of that society. In short, their arguments are always more likely to *count*. Explanation in the dangerous Rancièrian mode could then creep back in.

Yet whilst this might always remain a possibility, if the critic's skills are continuous with ordinary, everyday capacities everyone can be presumed to possess, we may still be able to talk about forms of explanation which lose their stultifying consequences. If we think ideology is not totalising, and can be identified through contradictions and crises, and if we think moreover that the knowledge and the practices of the critic are not of a different order to ordinary skills of critique, then there is no need to postulate that the other *needs* our explanation to come to see. Everyone could see it, we presume, if she operates on her intelligence, given the right circumstances and ultimately given the contingencies of chance. But we must be careful not to fall back onto the claim that others could see it given the right training, expertise and so on. If there is still a division between those who 'understand' now and those who don't 'understand' yet, this cannot be because they could not (yet) know in principle, but simply because no one can know and pay attention to everything at the same time.

But in using this modest account of explanation, we should not only re-evaluate the ability of the other to 'know' but also what our 'knowledge' of inequality amounts to. For Rancière is not the only theorist to present his work as hypotheses, supported by the facts, rather than knowledge to be benevolently imparted to the deluded. If we think of explanations in a modest form – as suggestions in the creation of which we have paid the best attention we can to the facts but which, ultimately, remain tentative hypotheses –

then we might then not see such a large divide between Rancière's work and the work of other critical theorists as his dismissal of their 'demystifying stultification' suggests. This allows us space to further investigate the potential overlaps between Critical Theory and Rancière, without arguing their methodology is necessarily in conflict with his 'method of equality.' Nevertheless, this is to question the uniqueness of Rancière's account, rather than entirely dismiss its continued relevance. As Celikates suggests, presupposing an 'epistemological break' between ordinary and scientific knowledge is anything but 'obsolete' [*überholt*] (2014: 143, own translation).

If we understand explanations in this modest, nuanced form, there seems no necessary reason why one's will to presuppose equality would be undermined by the 'explanation' offered. Indeed, I want to suggest that explanations in this nuanced form – explanations as hypotheses – could potentially be integrated into practices which *demonstrate* equal intelligence at the same time. For example, if we think along the lines of the emancipated network examined in section three, then certain tentative, hypothetical explanations, which point our attention to certain facts, could be seen as a starting point for further translations and further work. Indeed, the work of exploring inequality could, on this picture, be an occasion for the exercise of equal intelligence through which intelligence is revealed to itself. We can perhaps see such processes at work in numerous consciousness-raising groups, for example in the feminist tradition. These do not primarily seek to 'demystify' the participants but rather, through searching, hypothesising and sharing come to see their world and themselves differently and more clearly. At the same time, as participants in the process, they can be seen to 'reveal' their equality and intelligence to themselves.

This also allows us to re-examine Rancière's claim that a critique which seeks to affirm equality 'establishes a radical break with those who say that first you have to study the specific historical form of inequality, and so understand the logic of the system, before you can develop strategies that are a match for it' (ME: 112). Suggesting that studying forms of inequality and domination in a way which might also demonstrate equal intelligence does not necessarily return us to a picture where we 'have to' study a form of inequality to understand how to challenge it. We can still think that equality can be tested in all sorts of ways, many of which can be held apart from understanding inequality at all, as we saw with the account of sense-scrambling and perceptual alienation above. There would be no *need* to study inequality to emancipate ourselves in the Rancièrian sense. But at the same time, studying domination in this tentative, exploratory way need not work against, or even fail to motivate, aesthetic emancipation.

In this example, we may be able to integrate the disagreement between the different concepts of 'understanding' examined in this chapter. We could both achieve a better *knowledge* – understood as a hypothesis based on the facts to continue to be verified – of a system of domination and, through the development of this 'knowledge,' demonstrate through our capacity to translate and counter-translate that we belong to a common world. This has the advantage of potentially demonstrating an intelligence to itself (coming to see oneself as equal) as well as better understanding structures of inequality and bringing them into the light. That this second mode is still important to certain emancipatory struggles – those which, as Chanter argues, do not show up in Rancière's distribution of the sensible (2018: 20) – is highlighted by Rancière's former collaborator on the *Révoltes logiques* project, Geneviève Fraisse. Of her experiences investigating female oppression during that time, she writes:

I quickly understood that many of my interlocutors doubted the reality of masculine domination. This manifested itself in general and continues to do so, in two complementary ways: there are people of both sexes, who, convinced that we already have equality between the sexes, claim that a few corrective measures in the real will suffice and others who state, more speciously, that they do not "see" masculine domination at work. As a result, when it comes to the feminist question people cannot have been stifled by the science of domination and its traps. Quite the contrary! So, from the point of view of my task, it is necessary to convince people about the reality of domination, to localize it, to visualize it, to make it visible… (Fraisse, 2013: 48-49)

There is still a role then for making domination visible – for coming to see it better – but on this picture, there is no need to choose between explanation and equality. I suggest we can have both if explanations are understood in a nuanced, modest form.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Rancière as critical theorist

I have argued that Rancière's account of aesthetic emancipation can help us to better conceptualise three emancipatory practices: a politics of memory, struggles for recognition and emancipatory education. In all three cases I have demonstrated how the practice, as theorised by a recent Frankfurt School theorist is lacking or problematic, specifically in relation to a case study taken from decolonising 'struggles of the age'. I have then explored the way in which Rancière allows us to analyse these practices. Specifically, in the first chapter, I developed an alternative Rancièrian account of the politics of memory which focused on, and aimed to promote both the witnessing and occurrence of, 'aesthetic' emancipatory acts. In the second chapter, I argued for reconceiving of 'recognition' as disagreement in order to avoid the problematic reconciliatory tendencies of Honneth's work. Finally, in the third chapter, I gave a partial defence of Rancière's critique of stultification and how certain forms of explanation might inhibit the will of political actors to act upon their equality. In all three cases, then, I suggested Rancière could add to our understanding of these practices but only by making modifications to his account, specifically to the concepts of dis-identification and explanation.

In one sense, however, it might appear that there is an important, and thus far neglected, difference in the way the three practices are conceived. Chapters one and three focused on the politics of memory and emancipatory education respectively. These are practices not directly undertaken by those who struggle politically, but rather by those promoting

struggle. They are, in short, the practices of historians, politicians, intellectuals and teachers, which is to say, in Rancière's terms, the action of the part *with* a part. Specifically, I examined how these activities can be conceptualised to 'promote' aesthetic acts of emancipation. As such, these chapters can be seen to investigate practices which are one step removed from the political struggle itself. Chapter two, by contrast, focused on what Andra Simpson calls the politics of refusal and which I have argued can be seen as a form of 'recognition' struggle. Here, then, the focus was directly on the actions of the political actors themselves: those Rancière calls the part *without* a part.

Nevertheless, I suggest this division is not as sharp as it appears. This is because it is still the theorist who seeks to understand the way in which aesthetic emancipatory actions work. This demonstrates that the difference between the investigations in chapters one and three and chapter two is not as great as it might have appeared. Although the second chapter seems more directly focused on the struggle of the part without a part, it is still the role and purpose of the theorist in *studying* these practices which is in question. In all three cases we should inquire into the role of theory and the theorist in relation to these struggles. What precisely does a Rancièrian critical theory do?[1]

One important answer to this question, explored throughout the thesis, can be captured by Ruth Sonderegger's term 'affirmative critique'.[2] An affirmative critique, she writes:

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[1] Indeed, this is to take seriously the claim that we can sensibly talk about Rancièrian critical theory at all. As I discussed in the introduction and chapter three, he suggests his 'method of equality' distances his work radically from the 'tradition of critique.' This project has disputed the radicality of this claim, particularly in its reevaluation of 'explanation' in chapter three, part four. I will develop this claim further below.

[2] Other critics have called this affirmative critique by the name 'polemics'. A polemic can be understood as a disagreement in Rancière's terms. According to Arditi and Valentine, the dispute is over the recognized identity of the interlocutors, the intelligibility of the objects and the ground of argumentation (see discussion in Chambers, 2013: 123).

seeks to retrieve forgotten, hidden or invisible acts of critique and movements of resistance by writing about them or by publishing manifestos, letters and poems that testify to critical acts. Rancière's critique is affirmative to the extent that it emphasises the actuality of critique, and critical insofar as it questions theories such as Bourdieu's for ignoring actually existing forms of critique and resistance. (Sonderegger, 2012: 256-257)

Rancière's exposition of Gauny's and Jacotot's ideas, examined in chapters one and three respectively, constitute an exemplary form of such affirmative critique. The theorist, like the political actor, starts from the presumption of equality and seeks to verify the emancipatory practices they find. Without seeking to 'explain' what the actors really meant, the theorist 'adds her voice' to theirs, drawing attention to emancipatory acts which challenge the existing distribution of the sensible.

I have developed several examples of the operation and purpose of affirmative Rancièrian critique in this thesis. For example, I argued in chapter one that telling the histories of marginalised voices from the past constitutes a Rancièrian politics of memory. This practice is, I argued, better understood as 'sense-scrambling' than historical consciousness-raising and may have two potential effects on aesthetic emancipation in the present. Firstly, as observers, we become more likely to see acts of politics in the present. Secondly, as potential participants, we are perhaps more likely to see a 'moment of possibility' that we can take up ourselves in the present. This politics of memory therefore works towards making aesthetic politics potentially more likely to occur, and to be taken to be occurring. This is then one form an affirmative educational practice might take which aims not at 'directed and deliberate' consciousness-raising but rather at 'perceptual alienation'. Such work should be understood as a potential

contribution towards loosening our attachment to the existing distribution of the sensible and the inequalities of our social orders.

This means that Rancière's affirmative critique can be aligned with the definition of Critical Theory with which we started – 'the self-clarification of the struggles of the age' (Fraser, 1985: 97) – only in a very specific way. It is seeking to understand those struggling in their own dissensual terms and to contribute towards shifting the existing distribution in so doing. In other words, it seeks to clarify that the struggle *is political*.[3] But affirmative critique cannot be seen to be clarifying the forms of domination against which the struggle is targeted, nor interpreting what the political actors 'really meant' by their political acts.[4] More fundamentally, the work or knowledge of the theorist – even in its affirmative form – can never be seen, from a Rancièrian perspective, as a necessary prerequisite for emancipatory action (ME: 112).[5]

Yet at the same time, it is clear that Rancière has not only sought to uncover the hidden voices of the archives. He has also engaged in what appears to be negative forms of critique including the critique of stultification which I examined in detail in chapter three. But this creates a puzzle for us. For, whilst his theories affirm the emancipatory potential of egalitarian acts, the form these writings take approximates much more closely the types of critique he seems to be rejecting. For Sonderegger, as we saw above, affirmative critique is 'critical' insofar as it points out instances where theorists miss such emancipatory action. Yet the critique of stultification does not simply say this. It also

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[3] Such a 'clarification' should, of course, be understood within Rancière's own definition of understanding: offering a translation in one's own words of the words of another. See chapter three, part one.

[4] This second task would lead back to a hermeneutics of suspicion, examined in chapter three, part four, which Rancière rejects.

[5] Nevertheless, it is certainly not clear that Critical Theorists would consider their work a necessary prerequisite to emancipatory struggles either.

shows, as I suggested in chapter three, how stultifying pedagogy and social critique *actively undermine* the will to take up emancipatory action. This means the critique highlights not only missed acts of emancipation, but the way in which domination and inequality are sustained and emancipation undermined.

Similarly, Rancière's work also includes more traditional theoretical elaborations, perhaps most famously 'politics' and 'police.' But what was Rancière doing when he developed his work on politics and the police? Of course, in one sense it was an affirmative project, insofar as he theoretically elaborated how forms of intellectual emancipation can take a properly political form. Yet at another level, is he not here actually undertaking a form of critical theory he seems to reject? Is he not revealing to us what politics really is and the police reality behind what we take politics to be? Is he not providing an explanation of domination and inequality after all?

There are two possible answers to this. The first is to agree that Rancière is engaged not only in affirmative but also in negative critique. A negative critique here would consist, in some sense, in an analysis of relations of inequality or domination.[6] But what form of negative critique is compatible with Rancière's 'method of equality'? One answer to this question is suggested by Samuel Chambers who, in his recent monograph on Rancière, asks whether Rancière can be seen to offer a critical theory of society which 'has something to say about taking a system, or structure, or other type of "whole" and putting forth a critical analysis of it' (Chambers, 2013: 124). This means asking whether Rancière's specific interventions can be connected up as a critical theory of a particular social formation. He recognises that, to ask this question, he goes against Rancière's own

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[6] However, it could not be equated with, say, a Bourdieuian 'negative' critique which emphasises the difficulty 'if not – in some cases – the impossibility, of an effective critique of relations of domination' (Sonderegger, 2012: 248).

claim not to write a 'theory' of anything (FRM: 114), yet suggests we can generalise beyond particular interventions without arriving at a grand, systematic or totalising theory (Chambers, 2013: 125).[7]

For Chambers, the trick is to think a critical theory of society without resorting to a logic of inversion. As we saw in chapter three, Rancière rejects the metaphor of 'revealing' what was hidden to people who could not see it. Chambers asks what a critical theory might look like that started from a 'foolish assumption indeed' namely that 'the incapable are capable; that there is no hidden secret of the machine' (ES: 48). Of course, from a Rancièrian perspective, this would not start by *proving* the capacity of the incapable or, in other words, the equality of those presumed unequal. As we have seen in chapter three, we must simply presume equality as a starting point. But the trickier question is what such a critical theory would do. Chambers explicitly states that 'the critical dispositive that I am describing rejects the idea of taking understanding as a goal' since 'the police order can easily accommodate such a goal' (Chambers, 2013: 154). At the same time, he wants the theory to do more than simply demonstrate the contingency of a given social formation.

He argues that Marx's 1857 Introduction to *Capital* provides a model insofar as it is concerned not with historicising the concepts of political economy nor with historicising capitalism itself, but examining how that system works. According to Chambers, a critical theory of American capitalism since the crisis of 2008:

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[7] He asks whether this kind of theory 'need not be at odds with Rancièrian polemicisation, but can in fact run in parallel with and complement the latter' (Chambers, 2013: 125). In a similar sense, I have been pressing on the potential links between Rancière and the Frankfurt School to examine possible sites of useful overlap. This is to question the sharp division Rancière draws between himself and theories which say we need to understand something about domination before we can aim for emancipation (ME: 112).

could still be produced out of the assumption that there is no hidden truth of capitalism, but this means it would be incumbent on such a theory to show how capitalism operates, how it works, and what its effects are. And a demonstration of how capitalism functions might also serve to denaturalise it, render contingent, and call into question some of the mechanisms of capitalism (perhaps even the system as a whole). It would do so, however, not be presuming that there is a secret truth to be revealed, but rather by indicating the way a complex system functions. Perhaps, therefore, a renewed form of critical theory, based on foolish assumptions, could offer insights and possible paths towards political action and political change, while eschewing the dream of unshakable epistemological grounds and rejecting the goal of a guaranteed road to revolution. (Chambers, 2013: 156)

Here he takes a similar path to Woodford, who argues a Rancièrian critical theory should focus on 'what is perceived rather than distracting itself through concern over what this perception may (or may not) be hiding…' (Woodford, 2017: 80). Rather than seeking to reveal the truth hidden behind appearances, the focus would be on describing what one sees: paying attention to the facts as the ignorant schoolmaster would have us do. We are to presume, then, according to Woodford and Chambers, not that there is a hidden secret of capitalism but rather show how a complex system functions.

But I think there are two problems with Chambers' resolution. Firstly, the picture of critical theory he is working against seems uncharitable to say the least. It is certainly not clear that all critical theory – even in its Frankfurt School variation – seeks 'unshakable epistemological grounds' and neither is it clear that anyone these days aims for a

'guaranteed road' to revolution. That is not to deny that there are problems aligning Rancière's thought with certain forms of Critical Theory which claim to present irrefutable normative justifications. Yet what is striking about much Critical Theory is, despite its apparent obsession with normativity, it generally acknowledges the scale of the challenge and the provisional nature of its conclusions. Indeed, at the most modest end of the Critical Theory scale, the weaker contextualist normativity developed by Amy Allen with which we started, seems to escape Chambers' critique.

Secondly, it is not clear – on Chambers' terms – that he has resolved the puzzling issue of what a critical theory that eschews understanding would do. Chambers emphasises the role of dissensus and disagreement in his 'new critical *dispositif*', which means, presumably, that this description aims at dissensual effect. Yet it is not at all clear how describing the surface functioning of the capitalist system would have *dissensus* as an outcome. In what way would this place two worlds in one?[8] It seems that however much Chambers tries to move away from understanding as a goal, examining the functioning of the system has still not been fully disconnected from a model where understanding it better might have emancipatory consequences.

I suggest, then, that the 'new critical *dispositif*' Chambers develops is not only less new but also less distinct from other forms of critical theory which are already available. Indeed, it seems to overlap remarkably well with the more modest, nuanced forms of critical theory I discussed in chapter three. There I argued that we reject the stronger presumptions of 'explanation' examined in Althusser's work but hang on to tentative forms of explanation which assert neither epistemological certainty nor an assumption the other could not

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[8] Below I offer an account of the 'theory' of police and politics as dissensual re-description as a contrast to this description of the functioning of capitalism.

have known without our intervention, but simply that no one can pay attention to everything all the time (not least the complex workings a system such as capitalism). In rethinking 'explanation', I am questioning whether we need to move away from understanding[9] entirely. Indeed, I briefly suggested at the end of chapter three that whilst we do not need to return to the claim that we *have to* understand domination to emancipate ourselves, is it always the case that seeking to 'understand' or 'explain' domination must be anti-emancipatory? Specifically, I put forward a proposal for forms of consciousness-raising which might both explore something about how domination works and reveal an intelligence to itself, at one and the same time.

This means that, although Rancière points us towards potential problems with some forms of critique, this does not rule out an alliance with certain forms of critical theory. Using a chastised model of explanation, I think there is room to discuss the structures of domination and inequality, perhaps not strictly within but certainly without contradicting Rancière's method of equality. This also means that the Rancièrian critical theorist may engage in – or at least be (perhaps precariously) allied with – an approach which seeks a form of 'clarification' of struggles of the age understood more broadly than the affirmative picture examined above. With this nuanced model, I suggest Rancière and Frankfurt School theorists can potentially supplement each other, particularly in relation to the three emancipatory practices examined here. An example would be the tentative alliance between a deliberative and aesthetic politics of memory discussed in chapter one.[10] This opens the door for further studies into the possible productive overlaps

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[9] Understanding in the non-disagreement sense.

[10] This helps us respond to worries such as McNay's. She writes, for example, 'Rancière maintains that it is not his intention simply to discredit organised, strategic political practice and to valorise explosive scenes … But the all-or-nothing logic that governs his paradigm proves to be a theoretical straitjacket that prevents him from developing this claim in any meaningful and sustained sense. He reduces politics to the confrontation

between disagreement and deliberation, recognition, ideology critique and critical pedagogies which I have begun to examine in this thesis.

Yet whilst Rancière can at least be *allied* with certain forms of negative critique, it is still not clear to me that this is what he is engaged in when developing, for example, his concepts of 'politics' and 'police'. Unlike Chambers' proposal for a description of twenty-first century capitalism, Rancière does not show how our particular police order functions through a detailed analysis of what is on the surface of a complex system. Rather, I will suggest, the development of the concepts 'police' and 'politics' is in fact better understood as part of an 'affirmative' critique. But what does this mean? To understand this, I suggest we need to take seriously Rancière's claim that he never intended to write a 'theory of politics' (FRM: 114) and that that 'he[11] does not say what politics is but what it *might* be' (ibid., 119, *emphasis added*).[12] But if he is not telling us what politics, in general, *is*, and is only offering a proposition for what it *could* be (against the tone of much of his writings), then what is he doing?

I suggest we follow more closely his insistence that his work constitutes specific, 'polemical' interventions designed to address specific problems. In the case of politics and police, Rancière's aim was to shed light on a particular paradox[13] he had identified in

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between those who assert equality and those who deny it, and, whether, he intends it or not, this has the de facto effect of excluding many other types of democratic struggle…' (McNay, 2014: 164)

[11] This is written by Rancière himself in the third person.

[12] Note we have already seen this hypothetical formulation in relation to equality in chapter three: namely, that equality 'might' make inequality possible. There I questioned in what sense it can really be seen as a hypothesis and suggested in might point us rather towards a more nuanced account of explanation.

[13] This is not strictly true since in fact there were several other paradoxes which Rancière investigated in relation to politics. One was the fact that democrats who profess to love democracy, in fact, profoundly mistrust democracy (D: 96; DIS: 45-61). Another paradox concerns the fact that, before 1989, Marxists who openly distrusted so-called Western

the early nineties. It was the triumphant 'end of history' and the era of consensual democracy in continental Europe, but the same period saw the rise of new ethnic and xenophobic wars in former communist states and new forms of racism in western states. Rancière asks how consensus democracy and the end of Cold War antagonisms could be reconciled with these new instances of violence.

Politics and police were conceptual tools Rancière developed in this specific context. His strategy was to use these concepts to undermine the very coherence of the term 'consensus democracy.' Consensus democracy is a governmental form of western democracies, particularly associated with France and Germany in the years after 1989.[14] Rejecting the more hostile, two-party antagonisms of the Cold War years, consensus democracy is based on reasonable deliberation between individuals and social groups, each putting forward their interests and seeking to optimise their share. This takes place through negotiations limited by what is seen to be 'possible'.

Consensus democracy may look like a rational improvement on more antagonistic forms of politics but for Rancière it is deeply problematic. He writes:

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democracy in fact were vigilant in their fight for, and protection of, democratic rights and institutions; whilst post-1989 the new universal belief in democracy is combined with disaffection with protecting its institutions (D: 97). A third paradox examines the professed universal rejection of Marxism and what Rancière considers a new form of 'rampant Marxism' (D: 97). This is his characterisation of Marxism as metapolitics whereby politics is displaced into a different sphere. For both pre-1989 Marxists and twenty-first century neoliberals, politics is displaced into the social, and democracy becomes nothing more than the management of social and economic forces. The paradox, then, is that a neoliberalism which disavows Marxism can be considered a 'rampant' form of Marxist metapolitics.

[14] It is important to locate Rancière's political interventions within their context in France. Hence his focus is on consensus democracy as found in France and Germany, rather than the more neoliberal models of the UK and US.

for parties to opt for discussion rather than a fight, they must first exist as parties who then have to choose between two ways of obtaining their share. Before becoming a preference for peace over war, consensus is a certain regime of the perceptible: the regime in which the parties are presupposed as already given, their community established and the count of their speech identical to their linguistic performance. What consensus thus presupposes is the disappearance of any gap between a party to a dispute and a part of society. It is the disappearance of the mechanisms of appearance, of the miscount and the dispute opened up by the name "people" and the vacuum of their freedom. It is, in a word, the disappearance of politics. (D: 102)

Consensus politics, on this account, seeks to limit politics to the deliberation between pre-existing groups and only recognises 'partners' of dispute as already existing community parts. Everyone is already included; the 'people' are regarded as the same as the 'population.' But for Rancière this excludes the part with no part who break with their social location.

Rancière develops the concepts politics and police to make a radical critique of consensus democracy. If successfully implemented, he argues, consensus democracy would exclude the appearance of the part without a part. In other words, for Rancière, it excludes the moment of politics itself. But since Rancière suggests democracy and politics are synonymous,[15] consensus democracy must be viewed as an oxymoron: democracy without democracy, politics without politics. This means that Rancière's

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[15] He writes, for instance, '[f]or the forms of democracy are nothing less than the forms in which politics is constituted as a specific mode of human being-together. Democracy is not a regime of or a social way of life. It is the institution of politics itself…' (D: 101) Institution here means the 'bringing into being' or 'starting' of politics, not a social institution. This is another example of Rancière playing with concepts.

concepts also allow him to undermine the coherence of the very idea of consensus democracy.

We should remember this very specific context when understanding the development of the tools politics and police.[16] These tools helped Rancière to unwrap the paradox he had identified concerning the coincidence of consensus democracy and the rise of xenophobia.[17] This is not to say we should simply dismiss politics and police as tools which have outlived their usefulness, or claim that they could never be useful in another context. It is, rather, a warning against a certain, prevalent reading of politics and police as fixed theoretical concepts to be defended against all other interpretations. It is vital to note the *instability* Rancière claims for his concepts. Of his method he writes in the third person:

> What he does himself is to construct a moving map of a moving landscape, a map that is ceaselessly modified by the movement itself. This is why, indeed, his 'concepts' are instable: police and politics … don't mean the same thing from the beginning of the travel to the end; firstly because the travel is a fight too, a multi-waged fight where the emphasis can be put on different aspects; secondly because the travel – or the fight – continuously discovers new landscapes, paths

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[16] Rancière has argued that it was the paradox of consensus democracy that got him thinking about politics in the first place (FRM: 115). Nevertheless, the concepts police and politics also helped Rancière produce other critiques. For example, he criticizes political philosophy as a form of philosophy which, by tying politics to a particular manifestation, suppresses the moment of politics (D: 61-93). He also criticizes humanitarianism and the substitution of ethics for politics, insofar as this replaces the active, political subject with the passive, helpless universal victim (D: 123-140).

[17] For Rancière, suppressing the people understood as the 'demos' or part without a part results in the rise of the people understood as the 'ethnos' which is to say a particular ethnic group. This, for Rancière, explains the rise of xenophobia. It remains relatively obscure in his account, however, why precisely the suppression of the demos should necessarily lead to a resurgence of the ethnos.

or obstacles which oblige to reframe the conceptual net used to think where we are. (FRM: 120)

This could suggest that, depending on our inquiry, politics and police may be more or less useful tools; be emphasised in different ways; or require greater or lesser modification. The movement of the map – both through Rancière's and other's journeys with these concepts, and through the movements of history more generally – as well as the changing focus of the 'intervention' may require us to continue to develop these tools, as well as discard aspects which are no longer helpful.

To decide what extent a Rancièrian conceptual tool is still useful, I argue it is vital to examine what that concept *does*. Understanding what concepts can *do* is, for Rancière, to examine their role in organising, and potentially disrupting, the distribution of the sensible. Rancière has described the distribution as a *knot* 'tying together possible perceptions, interpretations, orientations and movements' (FRM: 120) [18] and for my purposes here, it is vital to emphasise that *concepts* form part of this distribution. This means that concepts work together with the many other elements of the matrix to prop up our current understanding of the world. Similarly, as we have seen, concepts can, when taken up in acts of disagreement, undermine and challenge a given distribution of the sensible.

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[18] It is worth noting here that talking about 'what concepts do' as well as including 'perceptions, interpretations, orientations and movements' within the knot, is already to move into territory where theory and practice are not distinct. For Rancière, there can be no clear distinction. This is largely because he is vociferously opposed to the division between those who think and those who work (intellectuals and workers). See, for example, AL.

However, this is not the end of the story, since any given 'knot' can be untied in many different ways. Political practice, as we have seen, can untie a given configuration through the appearance of a new political subjectivity. According to Rancière, as we have seen, politics is defined through the appearance of a political subject. But the *task* of politics is the 'subversion of the distribution of the sensible' (FRM: 121) and Rancière recognises this can be done in other ways. For example, he examines how literature 'weaves forms of community between things and beings in which anyone can feel anything. In this sense it is part of the democratic subversion of social conditions, it 'does' politics… it contributes to the reframing of forms of political experience' (FRM: 122; see also DIS: 152-168). For Rancière, the 'politics of literature' is an example of meta-politics. Meta-politics is the process whereby politics is displaced to another arena: 'the attempt to perform the task of politics … by other means' (FRM: 122). Whilst Rancière criticises meta-politics when it suppresses politics (D: 81-93), I argue that meta-politics should be promoted when it contributes to the task of politics.

So whilst concepts very often form part of a distribution of the sensible, they can also help to re-configure it and contribute to our 'moving maps.' The concepts 'politics' and 'police' are concepts in this second sense. They were designed as meta-political tools to prompt us to change the *configuration of sense* through which we view the world. As such, Rancière's purpose was less to accurately describe the world than to contribute to changing how it can be described. In this sense, it is unsurprising that measuring his account of politics against what we generally take politics to be can seem so unconvincing. Rancière precisely wants to unsettle us: specifically, readers who are living in consensus democracies.[19] The valuable question to consider in relation to the concepts

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[19] Of course, the extent to which we live in consensual democracies is an open question. Indeed, whether neoliberal Britain and America were ever consensus democracy is

politics and police is less 'is this the most accurate general definition of politics?' than 'what is revealed through this re-description?' Put negatively, what does that reluctance expose about our commitments to our existing ways of thinking and, positively, what would a shift in perspective allow us to see?

This is, then, an argument for engaging with the concepts he develops in his critical theory, but not for accepting them as 'true' in a strong sense.[20] Indeed, the suggestion that his definition of politics or police is trying to capture the truth of politics is missing the point. This also distinguishes the project, I suggest, from Chambers' critical theory of capitalism examined above which was concerned with showing how a complex system *actually* functions.[21] Nevertheless, it seems there must be some connection to the world as it is – here, to our existing understandings of police, the social and politics – for the conceptual innovations to have any bite. If politics and police were defined in a thoroughly unconvincing manner, they could simply be dismissed as irrelevant. It is, I suggest, the way in which the concepts both speak to us and confuse us *at the same time* which gives them their power. Like the political subject, they seem to put two worlds in one: the world in which politics consists in both institutional deliberation *and* moments of rupture; and in which the social is *both* an unequal hierarchy *and* the world in which we

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debatable. Recent political events suggests we might explicitly be re-entering a time of more antagonistic politics. For Rancière, this might well be no surprise since, for him, antagonism never actually went away. But this means it might well be the case that a critique of consensus politics is no longer the most pressing need towards which a Rancièrian critical theory of society would need to work – hardly a surprise given that *La Mésentente* was originally published in 1995. This means we can continue to investigate how the concepts politics and police might be developed or modified to reflect changing conditions.

[20] In this sense, it might be that I have taken his re-description of recognition as disagreement too literally. Perhaps the question is less whether this should be seen as recognition but rather what seeing such struggles *as* recognition allows us to come to see differently. However, I suggest my conclusions – which do not offer a new monological framework for understanding all 'proper' recognition struggles along these dissensual lines – are at least compatible with this second project.

[21] As such, it was unclear how it should function as a 'dissensus'.

believe we strive, through progress, for greater equality. It seems that, in developing the concepts 'politics' and 'police', Rancière captures an important element of politics and an important element of the social world. I am much less interested in defending his concepts in their entirety than seeing what can be seen from their perspective: seeing what the concept does within a given distribution of the sensible.[22] Unlike the negative critical theory account above, through which I suggested we could align Rancière with certain forms of Frankfurt School theory, this 'affirmative' critique would be a distinctly Rancièrian project.

We can see, briefly, how this distinctly Rancièrian project works to shift the distribution in relation to his concept 'police'. I suggest that in the term 'police' four definitions of the police coincide: one which is rejected and three which are partially adopted. In this sense, Rancière's concept of 'police' can be seen to place not two but potentially *four* worlds in one. We can see this in the following example:

> Let us start with an empirical given: police interventions in public spaces consist primarily not in interpellating demonstrators, but in breaking up demonstrations. The police is not the law which interpellates individuals (as in Louis Althusser's 'Hey, you there!')… It consists, before all else, in recalling the obviousness of what there is, or rather of what there is not, and its slogan is: 'Move along! There's nothing to see here!' The police is that which says that here, on this street, there's nothing to see and so nothing to do but move along. It asserts that the space for circulating is nothing but the space of circulation. (DIS: 37)

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[22] The unsettling point comes, it seems, in an uncanny (*unheimlich*) moment of recognition. In this sense, his method seems comparable to genealogy. On this comparison, see McNay, 2014: 147.

Here, he is clearly setting himself up against Althusser by arguing the police does not interpellate us as subjects. In so doing he is rejecting a particular model of ideology as we saw in chapter three. This means that, unlike the other three concepts of 'police', this is a concept he rejects outright.

The other three are all appealed to in some sense. The second conception of police is the 'empirical given' to which Rancière initially refers, meaning the everyday actions of the modern 'police'. The police's everyday practice in maintaining social order is appealed to – although does not coincide with – Rancière's far broader notion of 'police'. Thirdly, from Foucault's seventeenth century definition – to which he explicitly and uncharacteristically refers (D: 28) – the emphasis on circulation is taken: the police ensures the circulation of goods and people and, in so doing, uses an array of power techniques to maintain social order. Finally, however, the police – now in Rancière's terms – specifically protects circulation from anything which might appear within it. That is to say, it protects it from a supplement which it excludes. The police is therefore less concerned with institutional mechanisms for disciplining bodies and controlling populations than with the conditions through which specific institutional mechanisms become possible in the first place. By conceiving of our normal political practices and social order as the 'police' in these three – or even four – senses, we potentially come to see certain contradictions and problems which are covered over by the existing distribution of the sensible. This means that the important question is less whether we should accept Rancière's conception of 'police' as a true depiction of the social order than thinking through how this disagreement might allow for a 'scrambling' of the distribution and the potential impact this may have on aesthetic emancipatory action.

Focusing on what the concepts politics and police do also supports my call, made throughout this project, to re-evaluate the division between politics and police. I suggested in chapter two that this division should not be thought as sharp as many of Rancière's critics suggest. Instead of an 'ultra-politics' or a 'pure politics' which is reduced to hysterical, ineffectual gestures, I argued the division should be understood as porous, allowing for objects to pass between the 'spheres'. But if the concepts of 'politics' and 'police' are only concepts on a moving map, to be re-defined according to the needs of the intervention, then this gives further ammunition to the potential destabilisation of these concepts. There is then no reason to 'apply' them in a rigid way. After all, there is nothing as un-Rancièrian as 'policing' what counts as politics.[23] We can therefore move against Rancière's own concepts, depending on the needs of a specific intervention, but in a Rancièrian spirit. Among other things, this allows us to re-examine the apparent confinement of deliberation to the police in a new light; potentially enabling more comparative work to be undertaken into potential links between these theories.

I have made, then, both a case for considering Rancière a critical theorist and for the compatibility of his approach with certain Frankfurt School approaches. This can take the form of supplementation – bringing, for example, his forms of critique, politics of memory, practices of perceptual alienation and so on – into a perhaps precarious alliance with other, more mainstream approaches to Critical Theory. In other cases, he can be seen to offer a persuasive alternative to their approaches, for example, in relation to his analysis of certain recognition struggles or his rejection of certain forms of explanatory social theory. I suggest this points in the direction of further work into productive

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[23] Note this interpretation might allow us to make room for a Rancièrian '*politics* of memory'. There is no direct appearance of the political subject through the politics of memory and, as such, it would not count as political for Rancière. Yet as I have suggested here, we need not necessarily adopt this terminology ourselves.

encounters between disagreement and deliberation, recognition, ideology critique and critical pedagogies.

Rancière and decolonising struggles

This leaves one final question unanswered. I have argued that we can rethink critical theory between Rancière and the Frankfurt School but can we do so specifically in relation to the decolonising struggles of the age? I initially problematized the Frankfurt School for their failure to consider issues of empire and race in a sustained fashion and suggested Rancière could contribute to this project by focusing attention on the aesthetic dimension of emancipation. I then explored how this dimension plays out in relation to a politics of memory, specifically in contesting the legacy of the British Empire; to indigenous struggles for 'recognition'; and to emancipatory educational practices including those associated with decolonising movements such as Rhodes Must Fall and the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire.

One reason to focus on these struggles is because they seem to represent paradigm cases of the three practices which Rancière helps us to conceptualise. In particular, the situation of indigenous peoples struggling for land and sovereignty appears to exemplify the problems of a reconciliatory tendency in much recognition theory. At the same time, I suggested Rancière allows us to productively reconceive of the politics of refusal as a form of 'recognition'.

The politics of memory meanwhile is, as I argued in chapter one, urgently required to contest the legacy of the British Empire. I have suggested that a precarious alliance

between McCarthy's deliberative politics of memory and Rancière's aesthetic politics of memory could have important consequences for present-day politics, understood both in a deliberative and in an aesthetic sense. By integrating Rancière's perspective, I suggested, we might promote breaks with the distribution which, among other things, might allow for the radical effects of self-reimagining described by Baldwin and examined briefly in chapter one. He wrote:

> Try to imagine how you would feel if you woke up one morning to find the sun shining and all the stars aflame. You would be frightened because it is out of the order of nature. Any upheaval in the universe is terrifying because it so profoundly attacks one's sense of one's own reality. Well, the black man has functioned in the white man's world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and *as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations…* (Baldwin 2017: 17, emphasis added)

This 'fixed star' Baldwin adds, is precisely fixed into a position of inferiority: whites 'have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men' (ibid.). What might the effects be of 'subaltern' bodies and voices moving out of the inferior places into which colonialism has assigned them? Here we could think further, as Philip Watts suggests, about the links between Rancière's histories and the work of historians such as the Subaltern School who specifically investigate colonised, subaltern voices.

Finally, Rancière's critique of stultification and the affirmative practice of perceptual alienation is, I have suggested, an important consideration for emancipatory educational practices both in pedagogy and in social theory. We can further investigate how this

critique might bear upon the demands made by movements which, like *Rhodes Must Fall*, aim at the decolonisation of the university: one of the most important educational struggles of our times. Similarly, we could think further about whether the 'colonisation' of the mind can be conceived as a form of ideology, and if such a position might have unintentional anti-emancipatory effects.

Nevertheless, claiming that Rancière helps us address Critical Theory's relative neglect of issues of empire is still puzzling. On the one hand, of course, decolonising struggles are not the only ones to have an important aesthetic dimension. The failure to properly examine the aesthetic dimension of politics could be seen as a more general failing of Critical Theory, rather than one specifically related to issues of empire. I certainly would not deny that the conclusions here have broader implications beyond the more narrowly defined 'struggles of the age' which I have examined. In that sense, the work I have done here investigating the links between Rancière's aesthetic emancipation and Frankfurt School theory is part of a broader project.

But on the other, the question still remains as to how relevant Rancière's aesthetic emancipation and his focus on the 'part without a part' really is outside of the worker paradigm. This is to return to the worries raised by Tina Chanter and discussed in the introduction and in chapter two. Indeed, I modified his account in the second chapter in order to properly account for the indigenous politics of refusal. To what extent, then, can Rancière really be read together productively with these Frankfurt School thinkers in order to analyse anti-imperial and decolonising struggles of the age?

I suggest there is no need to choose between outright rejection and full endorsement of Rancière's work. Rather, it is examining these struggles which both seem to exemplify

and challenge his thought that can be most productive. Following Chanter, I argue identifying problematic aspects of Rancière's failure to register feminist and colonial concerns should not necessarily cause us to reject his work.[24] Instead, we might consider how other thinkers – for Chanter, specifically feminist and critical race theorists – might inform Rancière's work and vice versa. She asks which tasks such an encounter might set itself:

> Should it make good on the lacunae in Rancière's textual readings of Aristotle and Plato, the places where he could have incorporated women and slaves into his analyses but doesn't? Should it identify the ways in which the cultural imaginary that allows women and slaves to fade into the background of Rancière's political analyses reasserts itself elsewhere in his texts, haunting his analyses, inhibiting them? Should it learn from Rancière's approach by exploring dissensus in contexts that he himself does not? Should it apply Rancière's dissensual politics to the difficult work of intersectional politics? (Chanter 2018: 24)

Chanter does not choose between these approaches but suggests we 'slip between them,' complicating his story and drawing productive links.

This thesis contributed to at least two of these projects. On the one hand, it has followed other theorists, outlined in the introduction, who have applied Rancière's thought to contexts which he has himself not ventured into. Here I made an argument, for example, as to the productivity of his account of disagreement as a particular form of recognition.

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[24] This, she postulated, was due to the particular distribution of the sensible in which he was formed (Chanter 2018: 20). See the introduction and chapter two, part four.

On the other hand – and in order to make this case persuasively – I sought to modify Rancière's account to better account for what goes on in these instances. Specifically I modified one of Rancière's three criteria for studying the political agent. Whilst continuing to insist that the three elements – building a stage, disidentification and equality – are at work in the appearance of the political subject, I followed Chanter in disputing that acting on the presupposition of equality requires one to act in the 'name of anyone.'

The specific way in which Simpson's claim 'I am a Mohawk!' works is, however, different to the example of Sojourner Truth examined by Chanter. Like Sojourner Truth, who was not making a claim to a universal category such as 'human' but rather to the particular category 'woman,' Simpson was arguing to count as a Mohawk citizen: an identity not everyone can lay claim to (at least not in the same way). However, unlike Truth, Simpson was not claiming to belong to a category denied her: '*Ain't I a woman*?' Rather, she was asserting that the identity claim – which in some circumstances was applied to her – made sense in *that* context. As Rancière writes, she was recognised in certain respects but that recognition included the *disrespect* of failing to count in other ways. I suggested that, in making this claim, Simpson's act was one of dissensus and, in appearing as Mohawk-as-equal or Mohawk-as-sovereign, she certainly disidentified from existing understandings of that identity. Yet at the same time, she did not fully disidentify with her social role and she did not act in the 'name of anyone'. In examining the productivity of Rancière's thought for feminist and anti-colonial struggles, I suggest, it may be necessary to continue challenging this aspect of his thought.

This complicates and extends the notion of the 'between' which I have been investigating throughout this thesis. Throughout, I have focused primarily on arguing the

case for thinking critical theory between Rancière and the Frankfurt School. This involves, I have argued, both supplementing Frankfurt School theory with Rancière's affirmative critique as well as rethinking a nuanced form of negative critique in order to examine potential links between them. But now I am also suggesting that we also continue to think dissensus between Rancière and other thinkers concerned with feminist, postcolonial and critical race theory. As we have seen, we cannot take Rancière's work on dissensus and apply it unproblematically to colonial (and presumably other) contexts. It may well be necessary to further complicate Rancière's own picture as a result of further productive conversations. But this also means, in order to think between Rancière and the Frankfurt School, that we also need to take other theories into account. Here we find another parallel with Allen's work, with which we started, where she rethought the normativity of critical theory between the Frankfurt School, French theory *and* postcolonial theorists.

I suggest this is important work, especially insofar as issues of empire and race have been largely neglected by the Frankfurt School and, to a lesser extent, by Rancière and French theory. This was another reason for focusing in this thesis on decolonising struggles in relation to both the Frankfurt School and Rancière: as constituting one small contribution to broadening their conversations into an area about which these theories should have more to say. This is not to deny that such inter- or perhaps, in Rancière's terms, trans-disciplinary work is complex and fraught with potential problems. Yet as I have argued throughout this thesis, critical thought can prosper as it moves between places and out of place. To this end, then, I argue we should think both with and beyond Rancière in a move which could ultimately be seen as thoroughly Rancièrian. He is a thinker of the in-between after all.

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