the song itself, rather than of the singer or the singing, the narrator is not the author. The voice of the poem is not the poet. When Dylan himself truly grasped this (circa 1964), his songs became timeless. The co-editors and the chapters by Jones and by Brake address this issue to a certain extent, but this is a significant weakness in many studies of Dylan; and this volume would have had greater critical academic traction if it had addressed this more fundamentally. This book is, nevertheless, a welcome contribution to the appraisal of Dylan's 'political art'.

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Jacques Rancière: History, politics, aesthetics

Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (eds.)

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In his contribution to this excellent edited volume, Alain Badiou situates the development of Jacques Rancière's thought in the intellectual milieu of 1960s France. The defining issue that had emerged in this context concerned the relation between intellectual authority and social action, that is, the problem of *transmission* of revolutionary experience. Badiou outlines how Rancière has engaged in a 'struggle on two fronts' in developing a response to this problem (41).

On one front, Rancière has struggled against a 'scientific position that fetishized concepts' (31). This was the basis of Rancière's break with Althusser and the idea that social movements depend on intellectuals and the party to understand how to be emancipated. On this view, as Rancière puts it, the oppressed 'are where they are because they don't know where they are. And they don't know why they are where they are because they are where they are' (275). The role of the intellectual is to enlighten, through teaching, the masses what they do not know. In contrast, Rancière's concern is to understand the forms of knowledge produced by social movements that seek to 'reframe common sense' (277).

On the other front, Rancière has struggled against a 'praxical position that fetishized action and the immediate ideas of its agents' (31). Here,

Rancière differentiates his approach from Negri and his valorization of the multitude. As Badiou puts it, ‘Rancière detaches politics from all its vitalistic identifications, maintains its status as a declaration, its discursive force’ (41). Rancière thus insists that the categories he employs are not ‘ontological determinations’ (287). Rather his approach ‘returns descriptions and methods to their status as weapons in a war between discourses’ (282).

Badiou observes that the figure of the ‘ignorant master’ encapsulates Rancière’s answer to the problem of how the experience of emancipation can be transmitted without becoming an imposition. Badiou formalizes the dialect of knowledge/ignorance and authority/equality that Rancière develops as follows:

1. Under the condition of a declared equality, ignorance is the point from which a new knowledge can be born.
2. Under the authority of an ignorant master, knowledge can be a space for equality (42).

Contrary to the scientific position, emancipation does not begin with *knowledge* of the true sources of oppression but rather “‘*ignorance*” of the logic of inequality’ (Rancière, 277). As such, the declaration of equality is a *condition* for the creation of a new configuration of knowledge and its transmission.

Yet, in contrast to the praxical position, equality has no ground in a ‘real’ political subject, a ‘truly vital energy’ that exists independently of the social order (Rancière cited by Citton, 130). Rather, equality is *produced* insofar as ‘the new configuration of knowledge brings about a space of equality that did not exist before’ (Badiou, 43). For Rancière (cited by Citton), ‘a political subject is a type of theatrical being, temporary and localized’ (130). For Negri, the constituted power of a social order is parasitic on the biopower of the multitude, implying that liberation of the multitude would mean overcoming constituted power once and for all. For Rancière the subject of action emerges from a torsion brought about by the presupposition of a universal equality (politics) and the particular forms of hierarchy inscribed within a given social order (police). As such, the political subject is constituted in its relation to the social order through staging a dissensus and, whereas politics can bring about transformation to a social order, there can be no final liberation from the police. Police is a condition of possibility for politics.

This book draws together 16 critical responses to Rancière’s work, which emerged from conferences held at the University of Pittsburgh and the Centre Culturel International de Cerisy la Salle in 2005. The book is organized around Rancière’s contribution to history, politics and aesthetics and includes interventions from Étienne Balibar and Jean-Luc Nancy, among others, as well as a reply from Rancière himself. For the purpose of this review, I will

highlight two outstanding essays, which constitute critical responses from each of the two fronts identified by Badiou. Whereas Peter Hallward (following Badiou) defends the importance of organization and authority in waging effective political struggle, Yves Citton suggests that the vitalism of the multitude provides a basis for understanding those less dramatic moments of resistance that Rancière tends to neglect.

In his contribution that was previously published in *New Left Review*, Peter Hallward highlights three limits to Rancière's conception of 'anarchic equality'. First, Rancière's conception of politics refers only to sporadic and intermittent events and therefore fails to attend the role of political determination and the issue of strategic continuity in social struggles (111). Second, far from constituting a radical challenge, the dramatic political moments that Rancière valorizes may, in fact, be easily accommodated by the liberal constitutional state and the society of the spectacle (152-155). Third, while Rancière provides a persuasive account of the enthusiasm that often accompanies and inspires political action, he ignores questions of organization, requiring knowledge, skill and mastery that make political action effective (155-157).

In an intriguing essay, Yves Citton, an editor of the French journal *Multitudes*, argues that Rancière's conception of theatrical politics is not as incompatible with Negri's neo-Spinozist politics of the multitude as Rancière insists (134). The category of the sensible that is central to Rancière's political thought is valuable, Citton argues, because it overturns the traditional distinction between passivity and activity. Indeed, for Spinoza, 'our (active) power to affect and our (passive) power to be affected' develop in direct proportion to each other (122). Yet, he points out, Rancière's theatrical conception of politics privileges the dramatic moments of ('active') political agency over the ('passive') molecular processes of 'anticipating, espousing, and utilizing flows within an organic body', which bring about infinitesimal changes in the distribution of the sensible. This second modality of political agency he calls 'membrane politics' because it emphasizes acts of 'filtering' or selective re-presentation over acts of expression (138). Yet, he suggests that if Rancière were to 'theorize the dynamics of collective improvisation on which his model of theatrical politics implicitly relies' he would probably have to fall back on the kind of molecular politics he rejects in Negri (134).

Hallward and Citton essentially draw attention to the same deficit in Rancière's political thought concerning his lack of attention to what Max Weber calls the 'slow boring of hard boards': the mundane and unspectacular instrumental action that brings about incremental change. What is fascinating about the critical responses from Hallward and Citton are the rival conceptions of political agency that they each propose to respond to this deficit: the molar

politics of the militant versus the molecular politics of the membrane. Yet, neither really rings true with Rancière's own approach.

To understand the transmission of revolutionary experience via these slower, less dramatic processes from within Rancière's own framework, we should turn, as Citton suggests, to his historical research on the literary production of the nineteenth century worker's movement (134). Indeed, Rancière cites this historical work in responding to his critics. He quotes an extract written by a nineteenth century joiner, Gabriel Gauny, which was published during the French revolution of 1848 (274). Within the narrative of the joiner he discerns a 'tiny shift' that redefines the relationship between exploitation and delusion. The joiner's 'delusion' about the limited freedom he enjoys in his job would be explained by traditional radical critique as an incapacity that can only be overcome by gaining true knowledge of his exploitation. In contrast, Rancière insists on certain 'efficacy' in his delusion of freedom, the joiner's 'ignorance' of his exploitation, his decision to *ignore* social inequality and to think and act *as if* he is not exploited. This micropolitics that Rancière studied in his historical research underlies the concept of dissensus that he developed in his more recent work on politics and aesthetics.

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