

Erik Vogt

Department of Philosophy, Trinity College, Hartford, USA

Aesthetics Qua Excess: Mario Perniola and Jacques Rancière

Abstract: According to Jacques Rancière, the contemporary anti-aesthetic consensus has denounced aesthetics “as the perverse discourse which bars this encounter and which subjects works, or our appreciation thereof, to a machine of thought conceived for other ends: the philosophical absolute, the religion of the poem or the dream of social emancipation” (Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 2009: 2). However, what seems to be the most problematic trait of aesthetics is its excessive confusion of “pure thought, sensible affects and artistic practices.”

But for both Rancière and Mario Perniola, the excess of aesthetics, that is, its confusion and obliteration of the borders between the arts, between high art and popular art, as well as between art and life – a commixture not to be mistaken for some postmodern transgression of modernist boundaries, for both Rancière and Perniola keep critical distance to the notions of modernism and postmodernism – constitutes the very knot “by which thoughts, practices and affects are instituted and assigned a territory or a ‘specific’ object” (Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 2009: 4).

This paper will demonstrate that aesthetics in Rancière and Perniola represents neither simply a general art theory nor a theory defining art by means of its effects on the senses, but rather a specific order of the identification and thinking of art. Moreover, it will argue that Rancière’s and Perniola’s respective elaborations of the relationship between aesthetics and art occur in the larger context of a *primary aesthetics* associated with the topographical analysis of the means in which the sensible, common world is constructed, parceled out and contested. It will also be shown that primary aesthetics, for both Rancière and Perniola, includes non-artistic realms and practices such as politics, culture, education, science, and economy in that all these realms and practices presuppose the sensible configuration of a specific world. Thus, primary aesthetics is ultimately to be grasped as distribution of the sensible (Rancière) or as sensology (Perniola) that determines not only that which is given in a common manner, but also – and more specifically – that which can be seen, felt, said or done and at the same time modes of seeing, feeling, saying or doing that are excluded from that which is given in a common manner.

Keywords: Jacques Rancière; Mario Perniola; excess of aesthetics; distribution of the sensible; sensology; remainder.

According to Jacques Rancière, contemporary philosophical thinking about art is characterized by a “great anti-aesthetic consensus” shared by rather diverse thinkers such as Pierre Bourdieu, Terry Eagleton, Gianni Vattimo, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean-Marie Schaeffer, or Alain Badiou.¹ In addition to claims that aesthetics represents an ideological or even metaphysical discourse occluding the existing social relations, current celebrations of “the pure encounter with the unconditioned event of the artwork” characterize aesthetics “as the perverse discourse which bars this encounter and which subjects works, or our appreciation thereof, to a machine of thought conceived for other ends: the philosophical absolute, the religion of the poem or the dream of social emancipation.”² What seems to be the most problematic trait of aesthetics is that it constitutes an excess that is charged with overflowing not only the decorous borders between the arts, between high art and popular art but also those between art and life.³ In contrast, both Rancière and Mario Perniola affirm the very aesthetic excess that “formed two centuries ago between the sublimities of art and the noise of a water pump, between a veiled timbre of chords and the promise of a new humanity.”⁴

Their respective aesthetic accounts of art are elaborated in the larger context of a *primary aesthetics* tasked with the topographical analysis of the means through which the sensible world is constructed, distributed and contested.⁵ In short, primary aesthetics designates a distribution of the sensible, of that which can be seen, felt, said, and done at particular moments and at a particular place. Although primary aesthetics qua distribution of the sensible refers to the distributions of forms capable of structuring common experience and is therefore reminiscent of Kant’s transcendental aesthetics, it signifies rather a system of historical-apriori forms of sensible experience. Consequently, primary aesthetics in Rancière and Perniola cannot be identified with some pure epistemological or cognitive theory of sensible experience or feeling; rather, sensible experience and feeling have to be grasped in conjunction with the different specific distributions of the sensible, that is, with the regime(s) of norms determining the sensible experience and feeling of the common status quo. In other words, Rancière’s and Perniola’s respective elaborations of a primary aesthetics are not reducible to mere epistemological or cognitivist accounts of some subjective faculty or capacity for sensible experience and feeling, but rather refer primarily to collective practices that are conditioned in the socio-political, economic, and cultural constitution of common sensible experience and feeling.⁶ Both Rancière and Perniola

¹ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA : Polity Press, 2009), 64.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵ Rancière uses the term “primary aesthetics” in his *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 13.

⁶ I am indebted here to the way that Joseph Tanke elaborates on the question of imagination in Rancière’s aesthetic regime. According to Tanke, imagination must not be reduced to a subjective faculty or capacity that is of interest primarily in epistemological and cognitive terms, but rather has to be grasped as “a social capacity”. Cf. Joseph J. Tanke, *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), 151.

examine the ways in which the distribution of the sensible exceeding any narrowly conceived subjective-epistemological account of aesthetics determines simultaneously that which is given in a common manner and practices of distinction separating that which can be seen, felt, said, and done from that which cannot be seen, felt, said, and done.

Perniola defines the status quo distribution and partition of the sensible in western societies as “sensology”.⁷ According to his analysis of the contemporary western sensible world that is indebted both to Walter Benjamin’s theory of the technological reproducibility of art and sensuous experience, as well as to Guy Debord’s thesis of a commodity-fetishized society of the spectacle, an experience has made its presence felt since the 1960s that bears upon the fundamental inversion of the relationship between humans and things, the organic and the inorganic world, and this inversion has deeply affected the status of sensible experience and feeling.⁸ Sensibility has been seized by a radical reification that undermines not only the dualisms of subject-object and activity-passivity but also points to a collective and socialized external horizon of sense regarding which status quo feeling reveals itself as already-felt functioning as the historical-apriori formal condition of sensible experience and feeling. Sensology thus designates a kind of quasi-transcendental schematism of the already-felt underlying the existing sensible world with its already-felt styles of experience. These different styles of the already-felt that Perniola identifies in the different realms of popular culture, politics, economy, and art testify not only to the excessive character of sensology as primary aesthetics, but also have in common their reference to a type of impersonal, post-subjective, reified and indifferent feeling or sentient experience that functions as their general equivalent and makes tangible that the different styles of the already-felt exhibit commodity character and belong to a “world market of feeling”.⁹

It is not possible here to examine sensology and the ways in which it has conditioned the (im-)possibility of sentient experience today, nor is it possible here to outline Perniola’s brilliant and comprehensive phenomenology of the multiple contemporary styles of feeling sharing in the condition of the already-felt and issuing forth from culture, politics, economics, and art – styles of feeling such as counter-culture, fundamentalism, neo-cynicism, performativity, political correctness, neo-Faustism, neoclassicism, primitivism, the postmodern, the neo-ethnic, and extreme realism.¹⁰ However, in the face of the near-totalist nature of sensology, one could raise the question whether sensology might contain within itself excessive moments that allow for a battle to be waged precisely at the level of sensology, that is, at the very external and reified level that is constitutive of the impersonal, post-subjective sentient experience of contemporary sensology with its quasi-public space of the already-felt

⁷ Mario Perniola, *Del sentire* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2002), 5. All translations from the Italian are mine (E. V.).

⁸ Mario Perniola, *Enigmas: The Egyptian Moment in Society and Art*, trans. Christopher Woodall (London and New York: Verso, 1995), 22–58.

⁹ Perniola, *Del sentire*, 25.

¹⁰ Cf. Mario Perniola, *Disgusti. Le nuove tendenze estetiche* (Ancona, Milano: Costa & Nolan, 1999).

and the privatism of mass communication.¹¹ In this context, Perniola elaborates a conception of sensibility marked by excessive moments that are characterized by an indistinctness of thinking and feeling in which not only the traditional metaphysical dualism of thinking/activity and feeling/receptivity is neutralized, but in which making oneself feel becomes the very condition of experiencing the difference that manifests itself as/in the world. His conception of sensibility sketches therefore an anonymous, non-subjective and indifferent or disinterested feeling that contains the possibility for a new distribution of the sensible produced via the neutralization of the hierarchical and metaphysical dualisms of thinking/feeling, organic/inorganic, activity/receptivity, subject/world that are characteristic of sensology, which, after all, is nothing else but the fully realized figure of metaphysical activism and its attendant insensibility.¹² Moreover, the suspension of the distinction between the organic and the inorganic operative in the post-subjective, neutral, and indifferent feeling of difference is crucial for any attempt to reinstate the symbolic order against the reified public realm and its shadow of imaginary communication. In other words, the excess of (primary) aesthetics allowing for the transformation of the sensological-communicative distribution of the sensible into a genuine symbolic order is to be sought in “habitus, forms, rituals”: that is, in those “dimensions that represent an inorganic corporeality.”¹³ Ultimately, only forms and rituals “with their relative opacity and inexpressiveness” can re-open a symbolic space for sentient experiences and behaviors that might no longer be overwritten by either the already-felt or privatized, individualized sentiment. Again, (primary) aesthetics is capable of restoring the symbolic order against imaginary communication that is not only marked by systemic practices of disinformation and messaging, but also no longer functions according to the rules of traditional ideology in that it no longer interpellates its individuals into subjects with stable identities, but rather with merely instantaneous identities subject to permanent revision and self-fashioning according to the imperatives of neo-liberal society. Imaginary communication dissolves every kind of certainty and transforms its audience into a “kind of *tabula rasa* that is extremely sensitive and receptive but incapable of keeping its inscriptions beyond the instant of reception and transmission.”¹⁴ If the audience is to be released from its imprisonment in the here and now, from transmitting and receiving without memory and unconscious, primary aesthetics has to side with “*habitus*, forms, rituals that, in their exteriority, continue to exist as something fixed and accepted, even if their meaning has been lost or has lapsed into the unconscious

¹¹ Privatist and quasi-psychotic mass communication constitutes the other side of sensological society. Cf. Mario Perniola *Contro la comunicazione* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2004).

¹² Perniola’s neo-ancient sensibility exhibits certain affinities to Rancière’s repeated recourse to Friedrich Schiller’s account of the sentient experience in front of the statue of the Juno Ludovisi, for this statue belongs to a specific sensorium that, as free appearance, suspends or neutralizes the traditional dualisms of appearance and reality, form and matter, activity and passivity, understanding and sensibility, the made and the non-made, the known and the non-known, the willed and the non-willed by rendering them indistinct. Cf. Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 27–32.

¹³ Perniola, *Contro la comunicazione*, 109.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

or has never existed in the first place.”¹⁵ In other words, one has to protect inorganic public forms and ritual behaviors from the privatizing, expressionist prejudice constitutive of communication. Against the false claim that ritual behaviors can ultimately be reduced to mere expressions of subjective emotions, it has to be asserted that they constitute something like a “medium forming individual subjectivities.”¹⁶ By insisting that the ritual constitutes simultaneously an action, a thinking and a feeling, Perniola provides a novel interpretation of rituals. Contrary to the mythological appropriation of rituals and behaviors characteristic of communication, one has therefore to claim the autonomous character of rituals. In short, ritual experience is not only a suspension of purposeful activities and a tarrying with inorganic corporeality, but its iterative structure also deactivates the opposition between tradition and innovation, generating the same as the difference in repetition.

Inorganic corporeality and opaque and inexpressive forms are, however, also central characteristics of Perniola’s aesthetic account of the artwork. That is to say, if the artwork’s difference to both sensological stasis and communicative flows prescribing homogenization, conformity, and consensus is to be properly appreciated, one has to insist precisely on its work character: “In fact, if there is a difficulty in art, it must not be sought in the subject, in the artist, or in his desire to express himself and communicate, but in the work, in its radical extraneity, in its irreducibility to a single identity, in its essential enigmatic character.”¹⁷ In other words, the artwork contains “an incommunicable nucleus which is the source of interpretations. Under this aspect, it is similar to the real with which it shares the harsh and rocky inconvenience.”¹⁸ In other words, Perniola accords priority to a conception of art that clearly disengages and differs from the products of mass culture. Although his reflections within the context of primary aesthetics repeatedly argue for the necessity to traverse the paradises and hells of contemporary mass culture, especially with regard to the latter’s psychotic dimensions, and although they register the images and strong affective effects of fashion, television, cinema, cyberspace, advertising and so forth, they leave no doubt that art possesses a singular capacity eluding capture by the products of mass culture. If art is not to be relinquished to some subjectivist vitalism, it must not be reduced to fashion and communication. The work character of art marks the very excess not captured by communication, and this excess of the artwork over any of its interpretations constitutes its remainder in terms of “stability, steadiness, resistance.”¹⁹ Incidentally, Perniola insists that the notion of remainder must be freed in particular from those negative connotations ascribed to it by both situationists and conceptual artists who are taken in by vitalist and subjectivist misconceptions. Perniola’s account of the artwork as the remainder is explicitly directed against conceptions of art and

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁷ Mario Perniola, *Art and Its Shadow* (New York and London: Continuum, 2004), 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

the artwork defining the essence of the artwork in terms of the activity of the artist, thereby ascribing to the artwork the status of a physical residue occluding the activity of the artist. This conception of the artwork can be found in conceptual artists such as Joseph Kosuth who reduces the artwork to the presentation and tautological attestation of the respective artistic intention. On the other hand, Perniola turns against an institutional theory of art that, although rejecting both a metaphysical essentialism and conceptual art's accent on the activity of the artist, ultimately presents a kind of middle way that, although it might not exactly mirror the social status quo, presupposes nonetheless a "minimum of sociability".²⁰ Moreover, institutional art theory would represent another instance of a conception of the artwork problematically asserting identity of the artwork that would be without remainder and that would also have tautological character. That is to say: While the tautological operation of conceptual art is based on the ideal of transparency, the tautology inherent to institutional art theory does not consist in "a will to annul ties between art and reality, but, on the contrary, from a tendency to level art on the existent, conferring upon it an institutional character".²¹ While conceptual art is characterized by a logical tautology, institutional art theory features a different kind of tautology, that is, "a social circularity between art, artists and the world of art, each referring to the other. Even in this case there is no residue!"²²

Although the artwork as remainder is seen by Perniola as being capable of restituting to art "greatness and dignity" in the age of nihilism, that is, in an age in which the "melancholic reaction" to the disappearance of metaphysical values previously associated with art has led, on the one hand, to a "feeling of profound self-inadequacy that turns into self-denigration and abjection" and, on the other hand, to the "inability of believing anyone else worthy of esteem and admiration",²³ the artwork as remainder must not be conceived of in terms of reconciliation or harmony, but rather in the anti-monumental and anti-classical and anti-classicist terms of internal conflicts and antagonisms. The artwork as remainder means "that the whole does not hold, does not stand, but breaks up in asymmetrical elements, deeply discordant among each other".²⁴ Perniola's aesthetic conception of the artwork, therefore, exceeds both

²⁰ Ibid., 62.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem. However, one must also briefly mention that the respective tautologies in conceptual art and in institutional art theory are not the whole truth in so far as both carry a remainder or an excess against their express intentions. For instance, Jean-François Lyotard's interpretation of Kosuth's work as "meditation on writing" demonstrates that the inscription that Kosuth introduces repeatedly into his works function as remainder revealing itself as "opaque and impenetrable as a thing", whereas Nathalie Heinrich is able to show that the institutional theory of art contains an "opaque sociological remainder" in form of the audience, of the broad public of amateurs – a remainder "that does not belong to the world of art and that intervenes actively, even if negatively, to the determination of its status" (Ibid., 63; 64). Consequently, Perniola draws a conclusion directed against the very premise underlying both conceptual art and institutional art theory, according to which art can be defined via the concept of identity: "Art is not identical to itself" (Ibid., 65).

²³ Ibid., 67.

²⁴ Ibid., 66.

a modernist aesthetics of autonomy that recognizes in the form of the artwork an unbridgeable distance to the forms of social life and aesthetics aiming at the abolition of the separation of the artwork from social life in that it preserves the tension between the two.

Rancière conceives of the existing socio-political distribution of the sensible as “police”, that is, as a consensual distribution resulting from and relying on operations that delimit the borders of the perceptible, the thinkable, and the possible through attempts to monopolize the interpretations of sense within the status quo via the enactment of a logic of ‘naturally given’ inequality that creates forms of inclusion and exclusion through the distribution of bodies and voices in such a way so as to ensure the closure of the common sensible world.²⁵ However, recourse to “nature” as justification for the given social inequality and hierarchy carries within an – always disavowed – excess that has the potential of interrupting the existing social partition and distribution of roles. Rancière identifies this excess underlying the policed community as the fundamental equality of speaking beings, and he explores the latter primarily in terms of mute speech that de-classifies representative speech and suspends social distinctions.²⁶ However, this mute, ‘democratic’ speech does not reject the existing socio-political distribution of the sensible in order to make it more inclusive, but rather to transform it in such a manner to render visible the excess of equality underlying the policed distribution of the sensible.²⁷

The excess of equality underlies, however, not only any consensual distribution of the sensible, but is also at the core of the aesthetic identification of art. In contrast to both the ethical identification and the representative identification of art that reduce art either to a technique of maintaining the *ethos*, that is, the ethical status quo or to a decorous representative form, the identification of art within the aesthetic regime suspends any type of representative regime of norms that mandates the clear distinction between art and non-art, the classification of genres, the dignity and decorum of *sujets* and forms, and the persistence and cultivation of proper taste.²⁸ What is more, the aesthetic regime installs a specific conception of sensibility in which all things and objects are saturated with aesthetic sense. That is to say: “It strictly refers to the specific mode of being of whatever falls within the domain of art, to the mode of being

²⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement. Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 21–42. See also Tanke, *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction*, 56.

²⁶ Rancière conceptualizes this type of speech as writing characterized by an enunciative excess that cannot be regulated by a system of legitimation intent on defining the proper relationship between author and reader, speaker and receiver. Cf. Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 39–42.

²⁷ See Molly Anne Rothenberg, “Rancière’s Aesthetic Regime: Modernism, Politics, and the Logic of Excess,” in *A Handbook of Modernism Studies*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (Chicester: Wiley & Sons: 2013), 431–44. I owe to this essay some fundamental insights into the logic of excess in Rancière. Regarding the excess of the underlying equality, Rothenberg points out that this excess must be subjectivized; this subjectivization brings to light the “supernumerary subject of politics”, which is to be grasped as a “singular universal”. Cf. Rothenberg, “Rancière’s Aesthetic Regime,” 434.

²⁸ For Rancière’s differentiation of the three regimes of identifying art see Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 20–30.

of the objects of art.”²⁹ At the same time, it establishes an equality between any subject matter whatsoever, thereby not only rendering art in its singularity, but also rendering untenable any separation between aesthetic and non-aesthetic objects, between art and non-art untenable: “The aesthetic regime of the arts is the regime that strictly identifies art in the singular and frees it from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres.”³⁰ But the aesthetic identification of art destroys at the same time “the mimetic barrier that distinguished ways of doing and making affiliated with art from other ways of doing and making, a barrier that separated its rules from the order of social occupations. The aesthetic regime asserts the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity.”³¹ In other words, art in the aesthetic regime simultaneously asserts its autonomy and the indistinctness between its form and the forms of (political) life.

Rancière preferably elaborates this paradoxical and excessive being of art by reference to modern literature, for the *literarity* of modern literature is tantamount to a democratization of words that allows modern literature to speak about prosaic and mundane things in styles indifferent to their subject matters;³² that is, everything in life can become a literary *sujet*, can become eloquent through literature. The democratic literarity in/of modern literature is thus the very excess that renders modern literature and life indistinct. At the same time, modern literature must be grasped as a defensive operation in so far as it attempts to protect and render pure the specificity of literature against the consequences of democratic literarity, that is, against its appropriation by anyone.³³ But neither modernism’s attempt to purify art from (political) life nor the Hegelian reduction of art to something that has become historically inessential are sufficient responses to the paradoxical indistinction of art and (political) life. And not even directly equating them can capture the excessive indistinctness of art and (political) life produced by the aesthetic revolution.³⁴ Finally, their excessive indistinctness characteristic of the aesthetic regime renders the relationship between democratic literarity of modern literature and politics neither simply transitive nor simply intransitive; rather, one encounters at this point an excessive reduplication of terms into a politics of literature/aesthetics on the one hand, and a literature/aesthetics of politics on the other hand. For although literarity establishes grounds as a “non-hierarchical regime of art and writing” that, by opening up the possibility to “appropriate words freely”, figures as “a condition of the political capacity” in that it

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

³¹ *Ibidem.*

³² Regarding the notion of literarity, see Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Literature* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2011), 13. The following brief account of literarity is indebted to Alison Ross, “Expressivity, literarity, mute speech,” in *Jacques Rancière: Key Concepts*, ed. Jean-Philippe Deranty (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 139–42.

³³ Rancière’s favorite illustration for this move that ultimately attempts to protect art/literature from life is Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*.

³⁴ See Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 22–27.

“gives new forms to the capacity of words to freely take hold of bodies, and of bodies to appropriate this hold and make it their own”, its capacity to reconfigure “forms of experience through which political subjectivities take hold” is not to be confused with politics understood as “the construction of collectives of enunciation and collective demonstration”.³⁵ Hence Rancière’s proposition to preserve the tension between politics and art/literature as divergent, yet intersecting products of the logic of excess.³⁶

References

Perniola, Mario. *Art and Its Shadow*. New York, London: Continuum, 2004.

Perniola, Mario. *Contro la comunicazione*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2004.

Perniola, Mario. *Del sentire*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2002.

Perniola, Mario. *Disgusti. Le nuove tendenze estetiche*. Ancona, Milano: Costa & Nolan, 1999.

Perniola, Mario. *Enigmas: The Egyptian Moment in Society and Art*, trans. Christopher Woodall. London, New York: Verso, 1995.

Rancière, Jacques. “Losing Too Is Still Ours: An Interview About the Thwarted Politics of Literature.” In *Dissenting Words: Interviews with Jacques Rancière*, edited and translated by Emiliano Battista, 191–203. London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Rancière, Jacques. *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009.

Rancière, Jacques. *Dis-agreement. Politics and Philosophy* translated by Julie Rose. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Philosopher and His Poor*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. London, New York: Continuum, 2004.

³⁵ Jacques Rancière, “Losing Too Is Still Ours: An Interview About the Thwarted Politics of Literature,” in *Dissenting Words: Interviews with Jacques Rancière*, ed. and trans. Emiliano Battista (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2017), 195. Rancière adds immediately another reason in that “literature itself strives to exceed literacy, both by recreating forms that allow words to stick to bodies while suppressing the gap between them, and modes of reading the common that tend to hollow out the scene of political speech in favor of the interpretation of signs borne by silent things. In this sense, its politics is a metapolitics.” Rancière, “Losing Too Is Still Ours,” 195.

³⁶ The following passage speaking of the “divergence of the paths taken by political disagreement and literary misunderstanding” nicely captures this tension: “Literary dissensus works on changes in the scale and nature of individualities, on deconstruction of the relationships between things and meanings. In this, it differentiates itself from the work of political subjectification which configures new collectives by means of words. Political dissensus operates in the form of subjectification procedures that identify the declaration by the anonymous that they are a collective, an *us*, with reconfiguration of the field of political objects and actors. Literature goes in the opposite direction to this organization of the perceptual field around a subject of utterance. It dissolves the subjects of utterance in the fabric of the percepts and the affects of anonymous life.” Rancière, *The Politics of Literature*, 43.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Literature*. Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press, 2011.

Ross, Alison. “Expressivity, literacy, mute speech.” In *Jacques Rancière: Key Concepts*, edited by Jean-Philippe Deranty, 133–50. Durham: Acumen, 2010.

Rothenberg, Molly Anne. “Rancière’s Aesthetic Regime: Modernism, Politics, and the Logic of Excess.” In *A Handbook of Modernism Studies*, edited by Jean-Michel Rabaté, 431–44. Chichester: Wiley & Sons, 2013.

Tanke, Joseph J. *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction*. London and New York: Continuum, 2011.

Article received: April 17, 2019
Article accepted: July 6, 2019
Original scholarly paper