Chapter 4

Jacques Rancière and the Inscription of Resistances in Literature

Jacques Rancière is one of the most prominent theorists of resistance. He speaks of the 'demos' (common people) who seek to constitute themselves as speaking and thinking beings by breaking the hierarchies of knowledge and society. He carries forward Michel de Certeau's idea of the everyday practices of the ordinary that upset the strategies of the prevailing order. Rancière also radically rethinks the "politics" of literature and the "aesthetics" of politics. He reads literature in a way that would contribute to the establishing of a just and democratic order. The previous chapters consider how Camus explores moderate resistance of the oppressed and who Certeau understands the everyday tactical practices of the ordinary. In this chapter we study Rancière's analysis of the way the ordinary people, whom he calls the "uncounted" and "unaccounted for," inscribe their resistances.

The main concern of Camus, Certeau and Rancière is to articulate resistances by giving visibility and voice to the invisible and the ordinary. They also believe in the transformative power of writing. If Certeau examines the possibilities of resistance and the amelioration of the given order by drawing a link between everyday practices of the ordinary people to their times, Rancière reconsiders the relation between a given situation and the forms of visibility and the capacities of thought that inscribe resistances to create a space for the excluded.

Rancière appeared on the philosophical scene in the early 1960s as a young Althusserian, as one of the co-authors, with Louis Althusser, of Reading Capital (1965). The work, along with Althusser's For Marx, defined the field of structuralist Marxism. But Rancière's unique voice rocked the Althusserian scene in 1974 with The Lesson of Althusser (Politics 69). Rancière was influenced by Althusser as a student at
the École Normale Supérieure in 1960s. But Althusser's distance from political mobilizations during and after the events of May 1968 and the ever-widening gap between his theory and reality led Rancière to this critique of his former teacher. The events of May 1968 led him to critically re-examine "the social, political and historical forces operative in the production of theory." He pointed out that Althusser's school preached a "philosophy of order" that "anaesthetized the revolt against the bourgeoisie" (1).

Rancière explains the theoretical and political distance separating his position from the Althusserian Marxist position in the preface to The Lesson of Althusser. He rejects the elitism of Althusser as it insisted upon the gap separating the "universe of scientific cognition" from that of "ideological (mis) recognition" of the common masses (Rancière, Politics 69). Rancière interprets Althusser's politics of reading as offering truth in the form of an epiphany (or parousia)– the immediate presence of meaning. He finds Althusser's identification with naive empiricism (words – concepts of science – objects) coupled with religious speculation. He believes that Althusser offers a way of reading in which "absence" was openly shown in "presence" (Rancière, Flesh 129-30). Althusser's reading of Marx with an "oversight" – a failure to see what was present in the field of visible objects – is interpreted by Rancière as a gap in Althusser's theories of reading and knowledge (131). He identifies this gap with the act (or capacity) which makes one see the not-seen thing, or what that had been invisible inside seeing (135).

This gap turned Rancière to Michel de Foucault for methodological inspiration. In 1975 he founded a journal Les Rèvoltes Logiques dedicated to "recasting the relation between work and philosophy, or proletarians and intellectuals" (Rancière, "Politics" 191). Like Foucault, Rancière also moves across a number of disciplinary classifications which otherwise might be distinguished as philosophical,

Generally speaking, Rancière advocates a pro-people stance. His works undermine the philosophy that usurps for itself a privileged position by disenfranchising the 'others' – the poor, the proletariat, or anyone not destined "to think." He argues for overturning the imposed forms of classification and subverting the norms of representation that hierarchically differentiate one class of persons from another (such as workers from intellectuals, masters from followers, the articulate from the inarticulate, the artists from the non-artists). He unmask the events in the history of the workers' emancipation in *The Nights of Labour* (1981). He conceptualizes the relation between thought and society and between philosophical representation and its concrete historical object in *The Philosopher and His Poor* (1983). Rancière favours a new pedagogical methodology to abolish the presupposed inequalities of intelligence such as the academic hierarchy of master and discipline in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987) ("Politics" 191-92). He prefers to voice the points of view of those excluded from the hierarchies of knowledge. In short, he advocates a politics of democratic emancipation.
Rancière uses de-normalization and declassification on a number of successive though overlapping fronts such as the philosophical, pedagogical, political, sociological, historiographical and aesthetic. He gives recognition to the excluded who are given an unequal treatment by the prevailing order. He opposes Plato's division of society into functional orders (artisans, warriors, rulers) which banishes slaves and manual workers from the domain of philosophy. He challenges class identity and opposes the assigning of tasks to different persons: labour, war or thought. Rancière transgresses the prevailing functional lines and invokes the "excluded" for a task other than their own ("Politics" 191-92). Since history assigns 'appropriate' places, every voice becomes audible through the logic associated with its assigned place. This logic does not allow heresy: the displacing of the speaker and desegregation of the community. Contrary to it, Rancière puts forward heretical ideas in his book Disagreement. The "democratic heresy" conceptualized by him refuses any clear assignation of place and disrupts the prevailing order as it rejects the social distribution of roles. It also declassifies speech and gives voice to "floating subjects" to deregulate the "representations of places and portions" (192).

Rancière subverts classes and norms to record the intellectual life of the proletarian in the 1830s and 1840s in The Nights of Labour. The workers, notices Rancière, complain less about the material hardship and more about the predetermined quality of lives framed by rigid social hierarchy. The workers try to constitute themselves as speaking and thinking beings and to break the barrier between those who think and those who do not. Thus Rancière's de-normalization or declassification constructs a genealogy of difference in the meaning of words like "worker's movement," "class consciousness" and "worker's thought" ("Politics" 196). Rancière also rejects the hierarchical arrangement in pedagogy and the related Althusserian presupposition in which knowledge is linked to authority. He reflects on
the dogmatism of theory and the position of scholarly knowledge as he sees Althusser in terms of the "power of the professor, the professor of Marxism" at a distance from the social movements (195).

Rancière's eclectic research practice is unique as it subverts the hierarchical arrangement to reorganize the social order. Alain Badiou comments that Rancière's work "does not belong to any particular academic community . . . but inhabits unknown intervals between philosophy and politics and between documentary and fiction" (Rancière, Politics 1). Rancière overlooks the disciplinary boundaries to reinvent the relation between a situation and the forms of visibility as well as the capacities of thought attached to it. By doing so he creates a space beyond the given boundaries (Rancière, "Thinking" 9). He takes recourse to common language which, he affirms, has the power to abolish hierarchies. He considers the poetics of knowledge to be a discourse that reinscribes the potential of common language to invent objects, stories and arguments. He assumes that disciplines are ways of intervening in the interminable war between the reasons of equality and those of inequality (11-12).

Rancière forges his philosophical insights in unexpected contexts or in contexts that have been reformulated in an atypical fashion. He also interrogates the inequalities created by the functional orders in the social hierarchy which banish the workers and artisans from the domain of philosophy. In The Philosopher and His Poor (1983) Rancière notes the distinction which is conventionally made between people considered to be capable of genuine "thought" and those who are presumed to be lacking the ability, time and leisure for "thought." He critiques the Platonic division of society and questions the view point which privileges experts or theorists with intelligence and the capability of understanding. He argues that everybody has the same intelligence; what varies is the will and opportunity to exercise it (Rancière, "Politics" 191-92).
Rancière relates the philosophy immanent in the writings of a nineteenth-century carpenter Gabriel Gauny to Plato's philosophy. It is the temporality of the workers, activity and the denial of access to the universal *logos* that mainly holds Rancière's attention. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* also pays attention to those excluded from the hierarchies of knowledge. Rancière's works, therefore, reveal a movement from a rule-bound conception of art "preoccupied with matching any given object with its appropriate form of representation" to a regime that embraces "the endless confusion of art and non-art." He describes this movement of making art autonomous as the "aesthetic revolution" ("Politics" 193).

As the Platonic division of society and the Aristotelian mimetic principle imply inequalities, Rancière's aesthetic revolution rejects both. For him the Aristotelian elaboration of mimesis is not an artistic process because Aristotle's fabrication of a plot arranges actions in art (organizes the ways of doing, making, seeing and judging) according to the general order of occupations and ways of doing and making. Hence, "the representative primacy of action over characters or narration over description, the hierarchy of genres according to the dignity of their subject matter, and the very primacy of the art of speaking" make it analogous to the "hierarchical vision of the community" (Rancière, *Politics* 21-22). Rancière opposes all such social and intellectual hierarchies that create inequalities. As noted earlier, he follows the method of de-classification and de-normalization to analyze the aesthetic and political practices to establish equality.

After years of archival work on the nineteenth-century worker's writings and navigating between social history and the poetics of historiography, between politics and aesthetics and between great names like Plato, Aristotle and Friedrich Schiller and those of unknown thinkers like Joseph Jaccotot or Gabriel Gauny, Rancière concludes that all people are "equally intelligent" (be it the university professor or the
humble shoemaker). The denial of legitimacy to think a "wrong" paves the way for a political and aesthetic revolution. Therefore, Rancière promises equality and justice through the democracy of words (Mechoulan 3). Slavoj Žižek remarks that Rancière endeavours

... to elaborate the contours of those magic, violently poetic moments of political subjectivation in which the excluded put forward their claim to speak for themselves, to effectuate a change in the global perception of social space so that their claims would have a legitimate place in it. (Rancière, Politics 69)

As they are denied humanity and made inaudible in the so-called modern 'humanitarian' world that follows a consensual logic, the subjectivation of the 'excluded' catches Rancière's attention.

Rancière rejects the logic of "consensus" because it eliminates "every interval of appearance, of subjectification and of dispute" which are necessary to create a sphere of equality. He advances, instead, the logic of "dissensus" because it makes the powerlessness of the excluded (demos) emerge as a political force through disagreement (Rancière, Disagreement 112). Politics begins, for Rancière, with the emergence of the demos (people) as active agents within the Greek polis (city state) when they demand to be included and equally heard in the public sphere along with oligarchy and aristocracy (Politics 69). Since the demos – the common people, plebiasts, have no share in the given communal distribution of the sensible that coordinates the modes of being, doing, making and communicating, they protest against the prevailing dispensation. Their suffering makes them protest and this ruptures the logic of arche (logic of beginning/ruling). Demos is that "supplementary part" that disregards the logic of legitimate domination to inscribe "the count of the unaccounted for" or "the part of those who have no part" (Sixth Thesis, "Ten
Theses”). And since they demand their share against the "policing" order of the polis, the action of the supplementary subjects (demos) constitutes a political struggle. In this way, Rancière rejects the traditional meaning of political struggle (a debate between multiple interests) to give it a radically different interpretation.

Rancière also rejects consensus, Platonic divisions and Aristotelian representations to formulate a "distribution of the sensible" that would build a relationship between community and non-community to bring the invisible into visibility (Politics 12). The consensual systems block the mechanism of political subjectification as they deny a count to the invisible (non-identities), the denial which makes the society undemocratic. Only a fresh mode of subjectification based on disagreement, explains Rancière, can constitute the non-identities into speaking and thinking identities.

Rancière examines aesthetic and political practices from the perspective of what he calls "the distribution of the sensible." He views it as a system of self-evident facts of sense perception that shows only something in a particular way and delimits the respective parts and positions within it. These parts and positions are apportioned on the basis of the distribution of spaces, times and forms of activity which determine participation and the ways in which various individuals may have a part in this distribution. In The Politics of Aesthetics, Rancière writes:

The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed. (12)

He explains that Aristotle considers him to be a citizen who has a part in the act of governing and being governed. For Plato, artisans do not take part in the common

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26. It presupposes a prior aesthetic division between the visible and the invisible, audible and inaudible, the sayable and unsayable, denying space to the demos (Rancière, Eighth Thesis, "Ten Theses").
elements of community because work is everything for them. Rancière regards the conceptions of Aristotle and Plato as instances of different distribution or partition of the sensible. Therefore, the distribution of the sensible refers to the modes of perception which vary from person to person and from time to time.

Rancière's point is that the partition allows participation even as it separates and excludes. The seventh thesis of the "Ten Theses on Politics" states that the partition of the sensible refers to the cutting up of the world. A relation between a shared 'common' [uncommon partage] and the distribution of exclusive parts is determined through the sensible which also involves a partition between what is visible and what is invisible. Rancière favours that distribution of the sensible which would include the excluded, such as the artisans and the other workers whose part is either not considered or not counted.

Rancière constructs a unique genealogy of art and politics around the distribution of the sensible. He reads the history of Western literary theory in an innovative way on the basis of the partition of the sensible in terms of "three regimes of art": the ethical, the representational and the aesthetic. He sees the ethical regime as characteristic of Platonism as it is mainly concerned with the ethos of the community and establishes a distribution of images used to educate the citizens about their roles in the communal body. Rancière believes that art loses its autonomy in this regime because it is evaluated on the basis of its effect on the ethos of members in the community. So he argues that 'arts' are ways of doing and making for Plato and hence cannot be placed under politics (Rancière, Politics 20-21). He perceives Plato's presupposition that artisans cannot participate in activities of the public sphere (because they have no time for anything except their work) as eliminating them from the political sphere. Hence, when Rancière analyzes aesthetics in conjunction with politics, he formulates a new partition of the sensible that suspends the existing
sensory experience which sides with the deliberative citizen. The new distribution of
the sensible removes the artisan from the enclosures of work and takes him to public
sphere so that he can assume the identity of a deliberative citizen. Rancière terms this
as the irruption/eruption of the *demos* into the *polis*: of people into the public sphere,
which reframes the overall network of relationships between spaces/times,
subjects/objects and the common/the singular.

Rancière sees the representative regime as characteristic of an artistic system
of Aristotelian heritage that liberates arts from moral, religious and social criteria of
the ethical regime (*Politics* 4). The ethical regime gives importance to signification
and status of images. He even refers to the poetic regime of art which emerges from
Aristotle's critique of Plato. This regime takes mimesis as central to art. For Aristotle,
truth is poetic and an artistic object is a mimesis of reality with a certain form
imposed on matter. According to Aristotle, the poetic principle is a political matter; so
the hierarchy of genres submits to the principle of social hierarchy. In this hierarchy,
kings act and speak as kings and common people as common people. Consequently,
tragedy for Aristotle is an imitation of "men in action" and not of those who merely
"live" (22). For Rancière, mimesis is not an artistic process. Rather it is a regime of
visibility that links autonomy of art to the general order of occupations and ways of
doing and making. According to Rancière, the representative primacy of action over
characters or of narration over description, the hierarchy of genres according to the
dignity of their subject matter, and the primacy of the art of speaking, of speech in
actuality make art analogous with a "fully hierarchical vision of the community" (22).
Rancière finds Aristotle's universal truth to be a selective representation which is
subject to a social hierarchy. Hence, he rejects Aristotle's concept of representation.

The aesthetic regime rejects the hierarchies of the established order and
mobilizes transformation in the distribution of the sensible. It changes the distribution
of the sensible from a hierarchical organization of genres (as in representative regime) to an equality in the order. It also implies infinite democratic openness as it abolishes the dichotomous structure of mimesis (logos and pathos). It includes the "unrepresentable," erases the boundaries between art and non-art, and thus radically transforms the distribution of the sensible established by the representative regime. The aesthetic regime is characterized by a heterogeneous power because the ordinary and prosaic objects become poetic objects. When the prosaic objects become signs of history (as in Balzac), the new poetics works to make the society conscious of its own secret and hidden realities (Rancière, "Aesthetic" 144-45). So the aesthetic regime refers to a specific mode of being in which equality prevails due to an aesthetic autonomy of experience that makes the work of art autonomous. Hence, this autonomy of art grants representation to the hitherto unrepresentable when it emancipates the ordinary from hierarchical division to establish equality of all.

Rancière distinguishes aesthetic regime from modernity which is also anti-mimetic and is even identified with autonomy. He explains that modernity innovates by rupturing the distinction between the old and new which fails to achieve singularity. But the aesthetic regime does not rupture this distinction. Instead, it views "newness of tradition" in the "tradition of the new" as it relates to the past and sets up a relation with the 'non-artistic' part to invent new forms of life (Rancière, Politics 26). When common objects metamorphose and cross the borders of art and history to re-populate the realm of aesthetic experience, the aesthetic regime makes new formations. This regime takes even the works of the past as raw materials. It reviews, reframes and remakes them.

Rancière also distinguishes the aesthetic regime from the mechanical arts – the techniques of transmission or reproduction that confer visibility on masses and the anonymous individuals. Though mechanical production provides visibility to the anonymous, Rancière considers it to be mere production. However, he discerns power
in the aesthetic regime because it dismantles the correlation between the subject matter and the mode of representation and conveys the specific and heterogeneous beauty of the ordinary. It provides an absolute manner of seeing things through the features, clothes and gestures of the ordinary that hold beauty, force and a trace of truth. According to Rancière, when this manner is inscribed in literature, it brings an aesthetic revolution (Politics 34). The mechanical arts simply provide visibility, whereas the aesthetic regime carves a space for the invisible and the inaudible to make the order really democratic.

With the collapse of the system of constraining hierarchies, subject matter, genres and forms of expression the “aesthetic state” becomes a sphere of autonomy and of sensory equality in Rancière’s theorization ("Politics/Aesthetics" 4). The erasure of the boundaries between art and non-art (artistic creation and anonymous life) dismisses the authority and active understanding of the high classes to emphasize the passive sensibility of the excluded. Therefore, the crossing of borders between art and non-art the clash of the heterogeneous – the prosaisation of the poetical and the poetisation of the prosaic – resists dominations and uncovers the hidden reality behind absolute power to reconfigure the hierarchical order.

Heterogeneity is inherent in the metaphors and symbols seen in a work of art, observes Rancière. They are endowed with political power. The artist, believes Rancière, brings heterogeneity into his work through dissensus or disagreement. In his book Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy, Rancière writes:

Disagreement is not the conflict between one who says white and another who says black. It is the conflict between one who says white and another who also says white but does not understand the same thing by it or does not understand that the other is saying the same thing in the name of whiteness. (x)
Disagreement may occur when the interlocutors understand as well as not understand the same thing by the same words. It is neither a misconstruction that calls for additional knowledge nor a misunderstanding that calls for words to be refined. For Rancière, disagreement inscribes resistance in politics as well as literature which is concerned not with the words alone but with the situation of speaking parties too (Disagreement xi). A disagreement may qualify the relationship between two groups of speaking beings and so it may expose a "wrong" (53).

A wrong, according to Rancière, is the fundamental "blaberon" (noise) that interrupts the order and generates resistance as those who have no part in the natural order of domination interrupt it to create a disorder of revolt (Disagreement 11-13). A common wrong creates a conflict and brings about disagreement that looks towards the equality of all speaking beings. It is because of the inequality between the parts and the non-parts whose sum never equals the whole that a wrong appears to be a contradiction. Rancière believes that all workers' movements, demonstrations and strikes manifest disagreement. These frame a common world to reconfigure the partition of the sensible (55). They express the workers as reasonable speaking beings who might exchange arguments with their bosses in a common world. While the bosses interpret workers' movement or demonstration as a revolt of those who cannot understand orders, the workers speak in order to be "counted." According to Rancière, such demonstrations, disagreements and "wrongs" frame a common world.

Rancière states that literature, through the assertion of a common wrong and disagreement, does metapolitics as it detects the signs of untruth to reveal the falsehoods and the gaps between names and things (Disagreement 82). According to him, ideology of the dominant order has many gaps between words and things. The "democratic gap" reveals the "symptoms of untruth." So Rancière believes that these gaps link the just and the unjust to establish a relationship between the visible and the
invisible; the ways of doing, ways of being and ways of saying (90-91). It puts down absolute wrong, conceals the reality of disagreement and conflict as well as reduces political appearance to an illusion. The metapolitics of literature inscribes resistance, observes Rancière. It intervenes in the order to reconfigure it by giving count and place to the "uncounted" and "non-place" (88-90). So this metapolitics denounces all classes and reincorporates the subjects of politics by subjectification. He exemplifies this with the demonstrations of the French jobless in the mid-90s, perceived as "surplus," by the administration. But Rancière sees them as "plus." He does not consider them to be residue (invisible), but as capable of imposing themselves on the society. According to Rancière, strikes, struggles, disagreements and demonstrations become a universal gesture that reject power and domination and get linked to emancipatory politics (Politics 76-77).

Rancière understands the aesthetico-political protests of 'flash-mobs' (songs, speeches, acts), the multiple (dis-)identifications and lateral connections as the populist rebellions that get transformed into theatrical forms in the nineteenth-century and subvert the established social hierarchies. Such protests also reveal a disorientation and continual resistance to the imposed order (Politics 78-79). Rancière thus notes that both the political statements and the literary locutions "draft maps of the visible, trajectories between visible and the sayable, modes of being, modes of saying, and modes of doing and making" to reconfigure the map of the sensible (39).

In other words, the aesthetic regime forges a new rationality through literary devices that create disagreement. It rejects the causal logic of Aristotle as well as rearranges the logic of facts and the logic of fiction. In this way, it institutes a regime of equivalence where the ordinary/commonplace objects and subjects find a place. It links the poetic 'story' or 'history' to realism as it recounts "what happened" rather than "what could happen" (as in Aristotle). Since "what happened" falls under the regime of truth, Rancière holds that the real must be fictionalized. He links history and the
fabrication of stories because both establish the relationships between what is seen and what is said, what is done and what can be done.

Rancière is of the opinion that man, a political animal, is also a literary animal who lets himself be diverted from his "natural" purpose by the power of words that create disorder and contribute to the formation of political subjects. He believes that literary locutions take hold of bodies, introduce lines of fracture and "disincorporate" the bodies into imaginary collective bodies. This makes the literary disincorporation a political subjectivization that challenges the given distribution of the sensible. These reconfigurations effected by the 'fictions' of art and politics are to be regarded as "heterotopias" and not "utopias," says Rancière. He explains that utopias are extreme forms of polemical reconfiguration of the sensible that become unreal, ambiguous and non-polemical and lead to totalitarian catastrophes. For Rancière, artistic practices displace a given visibility through a democratic redistribution of the sensible. These practices remove the artisan from 'his' place and also give him 'time' to deliberate as a citizen. Thus the artisan becomes a double being. As art opens new forms of visibility through objects and subjects that recompose the landscape of the visible, it is no longer for art's sake. It is not "committed" to a political struggle. This art is political and does a metapolitics, believes Rancière (Politics 39-41).

Rancière explains that when the artist chooses to illuminate the class struggle of workers or the chaos of the world in a work of art, he or she brings out a dissensus that carries the political import of that work. The modes of narration make the political dissensus visible and inscribe new aesthetic possibilities that rupture the pre-constituted modes of framing (Rancière, Politics 61-64). Dissensus is the essence of politics for Rancière. It is not a confrontation of opinions but a clash between two partitions of the sensible. It involves a subject – worker, women, the ordinary – and inscribes resistance for equality (Eighth Thesis, "Ten Theses"). Since consensus pre-
emptys dissensus and reduces the surplus subjects and the people to the sum total of parts of the social body and of the political community, it reduces politics to police and founds inequality and injustice (Tenth Thesis, "Ten Theses"). The elimination of disputes and negotiations between individuals and groups brought by "consensus" make the modes of subjectification and democracy disappear (Rancière, Disagreement 102). For Rancière, democracy is not really the reign of individual/masses but a mode of subjectification of politics which disrupts the working of a given unequal order to establish a sphere of being for the invisible and the inaudible.

Politics and aesthetics, for Rancière, are mutually conditioned and conjoined realities that owe their existence to "the partition of the sensible." He observes that the "aesthetical knot" between the two is tied even before one can identify art or politics. This makes him re-assess the relationship between art and politics: the political import of art works, or the way art works represent social issues and struggles or matters of identity and difference. According to Rancière, both are linked through framing: they constitute a similar knot of the visible, the sayable and the thinkable in a common space or framework. He explains that the social structures, conflicts, identities and political issues represented by art do not make it political. Rather, art is political owing to the way in which it frames and interweaves the practices of visibility, being, feeling and saying into a "sense of common" or into a "common sensorium" (Rancière, "Talk"). Politics is not simply the embodiment and enactment of collective will. It is a cluster of perceptions and practices that shape a common world. It is not an exercise or struggle for power but a configuration of the partition of the sensible.

Politics happens when those who have "no time" for anything else except their work also use common speech to make themselves audible as well as visible. This results in the distribution and redistribution of times and spaces, places and identities, the innovation or modification of the ways of framing and re-framing the visible and
the invisible and of telling speech from noise. This brings new objects and subjects into visibility. Politics interrupts the distribution of the sensible of a policing order when the *demos* intervene to modify the aesthetico-political field of possibilities. This disturbs the accepted arrangement and creates a void (for subjectivation) which had been absent in a police order. The situation deviates from the normal order of things and inscribes "the (ac)count of the unaccounted for" (Rancière, Sixth Thesis, "Ten Theses"). Democracy, for Rancière, is neither a form of government nor a style of social life. It is a process that redistributes the system of the sensible without being able to absolutely and finally eliminate the inequalities of the police order (*Politics* 3).

Rancière also questions the conventional meaning of aesthetics when he redefines it as a specific regime of visibility that reconfigures the categories of the sensible experience. For him aesthetics is neither a theory of the beautiful nor a theory of sensibility. Instead it is "the distribution of the sensible" that determines a mode of articulation between forms of action, production, perception and thought (Rancière, *Politics* 10). Aesthetic practices, for Rancière, are actually "ways of doing and making" which intervene in the general distribution of the ways of doing and making to constitute fresh modes of visibility (12-13). Plato denies to the artisans the "distribution of the sensible" on the basis of an assumed disjunction between an *occupation* and the *aptitudes*. He sees stories [histories], myths or poetic productions as submitting to an end, with no aesthetics in them. But for Rancière aesthetics is a division of knowledge that interferes in the order of the sensible experience which brings social positions, attitudes, knowledges and illusions into correspondence a particular ("Thinking" 6). He links politics with aesthetics: politics has its own aesthetics and its own way of making people conscious by giving visibility to the concealed. Similarly, aesthetics has its own politics to transform the society by
making people understand the reality that is concealed in the appearances. Since both politics and aesthetics, according to Rancière, reframe the issues of domination and rebellion, these help him in conceptualizing "how to continue to resist" by repartitioning the sensible (Politics 79).

Rancière emphasizes the indistinguishability of art and life to establish connections that provoke a fresh political intelligibility ("Politics/Aesthetics"). While giving a specific aesthetic sphere to the art works, the aesthetic regime nevertheless does not withdraw them from politics (or forms of social life). Such works, being critical or political, provoke a break in perception. They also disclose the hidden secrets of power and violence by framing the scenes of dissensus. The implied heterogeneity reconstructs a given political space. As the artist takes up the claims of the excluded, the division between the capable and the incapable breaks down. The demos make an appearance in the polis and enter the political order (Rancière, "Politics" 202).

For Rancière, both politics and art create a dissensus to reveal the miscounting and misaccounting which reconfigure the frameworks of the visible and the thinkable ("Politics" 198-200). He observes that in modern times art is more concerned with issues and situations that have traditionally belonged to politics. For instance, the Flaubertian perspective – "a book about nothing" (equality of subjects and intensities) makes politics and aesthetic merge into ethics (204-05). Therefore, it becomes clear that the aesthetic regime reshapes the conflicts in politics by the limits of its own politics and promises equality to the non-part.

Rancière asserts that with an indifference to hierarchies and concern for the "ordinary splendor" – the permeability between the realm of art and the realm of prosaic life – the aesthetic form takes a new form of life. This new form of art frames a new ethos that promises a new life to the individuals and the community (Rancière,
"Aesthetic Revolution" 133). Thus Rancière dismisses the hierarchical and rule-bound conception of art to construct a politics of literature which inscribes resistance and brings in the egalitarian principle in the order ("Politics of Literature" 10).

According to Rancière, literature "does" politics through the revolutionary alliance of art and politics. It envisions human beings in "new structures" and "new forms of life" (Rancière, *Politics* 16). He elaborates that the politics of literature is not a matter of personal commitment of the writer to the social and political issues and struggles of the times. It is also not a representation of political events. Rather it is the "democratic" principle of indifference that replaces the "aristocratic absolutization of style" ("Politics of Literature" 11). It disregards the difference between high and low, and noble and ignoble subject matter. Rancière explains this point with the example of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* where equality of all subject matter constitutes an equality of indifference, a democracy in literature. Rancière observes a negation of hierarchies in Flaubert's use of transparent words in prose. Alluding to Sartre's reading, Rancière says that Flaubert seizes the object, immobilizes it and breaks its back, and changes it into stone, thus petrifying it (11). He thus comprehends Flaubert's literary petrification (of human action as well as human language) not as merely a literary device. Though Flaubert has no political commitment, his prose consequently becomes an embodiment of democracy. As the sentences become "mute pebbles," without a father to guide, and go their way to speak to anyone and everyone, Rancière observes a politically significant literariness in them. These mute pebbles determine the partitioning of the sensible which otherwise ends the opposition between those who speak and those who only make noise, those who act and those who only live (14-15). Hence, the muteness of literature speaks in another way by linking things and words so as to discover the possible democratic disorder. The mute letters that can be retrieved by anybody carry a certain politics as they speak better
than any orator. They display and decipher the symptoms of the state as they delve
into the seams and strata under the stage of orators and politicians (18). Rancière
points out that in this way the realistic novels do their politics of literature.

Rancière also uses the example of Balzac's *The Wild Ass's Skin*, which
describes it as "a mixture of worlds and ages" where objects and images are equal and
reveal the poeticity as well as historicity of ordinary things ("Politics of Literature"
19). He states that literature displays the earth-bound reality through a phantasmagoric
fabric of poetic signs which are historical as well as political symptoms. When the
characters are made intelligible through their clothes, the stones of their houses or the
wall papers of their rooms, literature is linked with science and politics. According to
Rancière, literature does a metapolitics through an interpretation of the unconscious of
society. It thus upsets the hierarchies of the representational system and the principle
of ad-equation between the given ways of being and ways of speaking. However,
Rancière makes it clear that though aesthetic and political dimensions are intertwined
in the aesthetic regime, it does not make political equality the equivalent of aesthetic
equality. Literature comprises the democracy of the written word but does not denote
democracy as a political form (Rancière, *Politics* 52-53).

Rancière observes that the democracy of the "mute letters" is largely
misunderstood because the writers refuse to serve any ends assigned to them. In his
article "Literary Misunderstanding," he explains *misunderstanding* as characteristic of
the epoch of literature in which literature asserts itself as literature (93). An artist's
fame is assessed in terms of the misunderstanding that his or her work produces.
Misunderstanding is a divergence of interpretation with regard to the meaning of
words or acts leading to disagreement. Rancière considers this to be a miscalculation
(*mé compte*) – a falling out over an account (*compte*) (91, 94). It is a miscalculation
and not a linguistic ambiguity. A writer's choice of characters devoid of the enigmatic
equality, points out Rancière, reveals the real state of the world and seals the contract between the literary elite and the socio-political elite at the expense of the people to create a literary misunderstanding. Writers like Mallarmé, Rimbaud and Proust dismantle the stock list of sensations to create a literary misunderstanding (95-96).

Rancière thus concludes that the description of "every leaf vein by vein . . . front and back" and the confusion between reality and fiction in Proust becomes a new form of writing that makes "superfluous bodies" having political implications visible ("Literary" 96). The novels of Flaubert and Proust become democratic in so far as they give space to all objects and subjects through the indistinction of places and times. Flaubert's Madame Bovary constructs literary indifference/equality but maintains a distance from any political subjectivation. This "molecular equality" of affects is in opposition to the "molar equality" that constructs the democratic political scene (Rancière, Politics 56). As they give a "molecular" and not a "molar" account of every unit, such literary democracy emphasizes the invention of words by which those who are not counted get counted and accounted for. This joins literary misunderstanding with political disagreement. Both literature and politics involve a repartitioning of the sensible, the intertwining of the ways of being, doing and speaking to frame a common world; misunderstanding and disagreement invent words, statements, arguments and proofs to include the excluded. Both suspend the consensual logic, account from another angle to count in the excluded to reconfigure the visible order. Both deconstruct and dismantle the existing hierarchies to shake the foundations of the political subject-formation to establish a democratic order.

Literary misunderstanding through the invention of new words, the use of silent and ordinary things dismantles hierarchies and creates scenes of sub-significance and super-significance that lead to dissensus. In this way, it inscribes resistance in literature as it involves a metapolitics – it reads signs and releases them
from their meanings to give space to the silent and excluded. Rancière makes it clear that though literary misunderstanding creates scenes of dissensus to show concern for the "unaccounted for" and thus does a metapolitics, it is not necessarily in service of political disagreement ("Literary" 101).

Rancière examines "the excursion of the Word" in his book *The Flesh of Words* (1998). The "Incarnate Word," believes Rancière, passes into the stories of the everyday labors of the people. As the great story of the Incarnate Word passes into sacred writing, from Scriptures [ê critures] to writing [Ê criure], from writing to the world which is its destination, it involves a movement (1). This makes the word not simply a referent or meaning of a thing but the *logos* of movement. The "Word . . . [becomes] flesh" (1), has infinite number of things to say, infinite number of signs to reveal which the author then uses to make great stories. Writing thus is not the "mime" of living speech but "speech on the march that traverses all the figures of discourse in movement: walking around, dialogue, debate, parody, myth, oracle, prayer" (4). Thus a text becomes a body with speech as the soul that becomes action and gives rhythm to the body. This manifests the politics of literature for Rancière. It may to be noted that Rancière's views on writing in *The Flesh of Words* somewhat echo those of Certeau's on the scriptural enterprise in *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

Rancière explains that the "poets' politics" is the link between poetic utterance and political subjectivity that brings about movements of change (*Flesh* 9); it is not political or personal experience of the poet. He explains this with the help of the works of Wordsworth, Mandelstam and Rimbaud, among others, which reveal the power of the words to make man rise up and march. Rancière considers wind, clouds, the path or the wave (well-known symbols in Romantic poetry) to be "*accompaniments*" which coexist with "I" throughout the poem until a space of appearance is made (12). In Wordsworth's "Daffodils" "I" slips and makes space for
the appearance of the daffodils. For Rancière, words coincide with things, utterances, visions and, hence, a relationship with the "we" of the community is developed. An accompaniment signifies a new method of figuration and of subjectivation which coincides with a vision that undermines the old model of politics. It suppresses *mimesis* and annuls the division between high and low and between noble and base and so allows the poet to withdraw from the duty of representation to wander "like a cloud." This wandering, so in turn, provides new visibility as well as liberty and equality (Rancière, *Flesh* 13-15).

Rancière regards metaphors as political transport and the metaphorical journey as a political journey. Owing to the movements and the sensory experience that reveal truth which the accompaniment initiates, this way of seeing gets converted into hope for change. Such writings go against the hierarchies of representation and do a politics of literature (Rancière, *Flesh* 18-19). Rancière studies the saturation of symbols and images in Mandelstam's "The Twilight of Liberty" (May 1918) (26-30). As the symbols seal the images and dematerialize the words, the "symbolist capture of the poem" is interpreted by Rancière as the "state capture of the revolution" (31). So the captive swallows convey the need for new flesh and form, for new culture and new life. Mandelstam tries to give life and power to the symbols; he liberates the signifiers and provides them with a possibility of wandering freely in the poem. This is termed as the politics of literature by Rancière. He interprets "the night of separation" that divides "the frothing nocturnal waters" as signifiers of "poetic-political" rigor that lead to a movement that challenges and rearranges the oppressed order (33).

Rancière sees in the writings of Rimbaud the word accessible to all senses and finds a body beneath the text. This is also the new language – a language of the future that would invent a new glorious body of the community. Rimbaud constructs this new language through a disharmony – non-agreement, indifference to the social order.
He does not describe any urban landscape. Rather, he writes his century by fixing its codes and symbols in order to give it what it lacks. So he reconstitutes voices which awaken "brotherly" energies (Rancière, *Flesh* 53). Rimbaud perceives this new language as an alchemy which turns the word into gold. This removes the veil of dark azure to make the human relationships shine for a new resurrection of the body (54). Such an artistic creation brings together the lie, language and places to construct a new language that has the power to bring changes in the order.

Rancière remarks that the imbalance and the singular timbre of the chain of obscure misfortune in Rimbaud denotes both great hope and great pain which summons a language that points out the disorder to bring in a democratic order instead (*Flesh* 58). Actually, the stubbornness of thought linked to the misfortune, elaborates Rancière, wants to include those excluded. Hence, all dark stories of infernal menages in the form and vocabulary of idiotic songs – alliance of idiocy and obstinacy – propose liberation.

Rancière views the song of the obscure misfortune as the logic of revolt and the movement of poetry as movement of great hope. The artist sings of the unredeemable and also sells dreams of a glorified body by staying inside the gap between old history (the song of the people and salvation of bodies) and the new one (poetic-political) (Rancière, *Flesh* 66-67). The novel re-poeticizes a world that has lost its poetic character (71). Rancière's idea recalls Camus's view on the artist's role in mending the social fabric. It also recalls Certeau's view of the artist as one who performs a surgery on the diseased social order.

Rancière uses Balzac's novel *The Village Priest* to demonstrate that fiction, like the space of an island, defines a certain world by "unmaking another one" (*Flesh* 100). Every word on the island of a book (novel) is disturbed by the superimposition of a space with indeterminate destination that reorganizes the relationship between
words and things, between the order of discourse and the order of conditions to carve out a space for the excluded. Rancière points out that good writing is not the one written on papyrus, parchment or paper but is the one inscribed on the texture of things that modifies the perceptible world and redistributes the sites. Such writing establishes a democracy of both words and the order (104-06). *The Village Priest* illustrates a tension of literary mastery and democratic literarity which proposes a new writing of the new community as it links ordinary lives to art (110).

Rancière's conceptualization of resistance in terms of a politics of literature is also reflected in his book titled *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. He looks critically at human nature, education, pedagogy, ignorance, intelligence and emancipation through the figure of a French instructor named Joseph Jacotot. Rancière explains that a school master's explication of a text creates "a veil of ignorance" (6) through a world of the superior (the master, the explicator) and the inferior (the student, the ignorant one). All people, however, are capable of learning without explication just as they universally acquire their mother tongue by imitation and correction. Explication, according to Rancière, stultifies learning as it short-circuits the journey which a student is capable of making (5-10, 13). Therefore, Rancière argues for the emancipation of students' intelligences.

The Flemish students in Jacotot's class use their own methods to learn French. Rancière calls this the oldest method of learning in the world. This effort of the students also exhibits emancipation from the inferiority inflicted by stultification. It breaks the circle of superior minds as it empowers the intelligence of the students. Rancière concludes that the capacity of different people to comprehend complex ideas is the same; what varies is the will of the people which produces different types of work (*Ignorant* 50).
In *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière* Todd May attempts an evaluation of the significance of the emergence and participation of the *demos* in the given order. He makes a comparative study of Rancière's democratic politics and the theories of distributive justice and equality postulated by Robert Nozick, John Rawls, Amartya Sen and Iris Marion Young. May finds that the theories of distributive justice attach importance to material goods but overlook the twin problems of oppression and domination. Oppression inhibits the ability to communicate or express one's perspective on social life; domination inhibits participation in public life which is very essential for equality (4-12). Sen's theory, according to May, makes citizens the recipients of equality – objects rather than subjects who can create and protect their equality (20). May, therefore, scrutinizes the conceptualization of equality in Rancière and remarks that passive equality which marks the globalized world is a form of policing. It excludes the *demos* from the public sphere. May eulogizes Rancière's effort to declassify for the purpose of active equality. He sees the dissensus of the *demos* as a rejection of their marginalized position (49-66).

Active equality is acquired through demonstrations, strikes and protests by the *demos*. These activities lead to the formation of subjects as they smash the hierarchical identities. It is because of the difference between subjectification and identification, notes May, that the subjects appear and impress themselves on the exploitative scene (64-70). He also distinguishes Rancière's position from anarchism in its critique of domination. Anarchists reduce equality to liberty, but Rancière renews even the anarchist tradition by characterizing the movements of equality in the name of democracy, observes May. Though Rancière privileges political action from "below" like the anarchists do, it is not to be misconstrued as a utopian ideal that leads to final justice (89). May notes that the element of utopianism never creeps into Rancière's works because his democratic politics strives to improve the given order and does not aim at a "final" state of justice (99). It introduces "another sensibility,"
another world into the world of the police order to give the supplementary non-part a part in the community (111).

May favors Rancière's concept of *dissensus* as it is a peaceful and non-violent way of creating two worlds bound by a common narrative – the commitment to equality. It holds the political action within an ethical framework to maintain solidarity. May elaborates that the non-violent *dissensus* is not to be taken as passivity because it carries greater possibilities of declassification than of violent resistance. He points out that the theme central to Rancière's political thought is "the relation of inequality rather than equality" as the non-violent declassification creates as well as recognizes the equality of others (119, 136).

May's analysis is, however, limited to the political and ethical contexts. He fails to interweave it with aesthetics and literature. His overemphasis on political participation overlooks the intertwining of the political and the aesthetic which actually distinguishes Rancière's conceptualizations. He also ignores the similarity between political *dissensus* and literary misunderstanding which entrusts literature with the potential to reconfigure the unjust order. May also ignores the modes of subjectification and social movements as well as revolutions on the literary scene that create a politics of dissensus and do a politics to infuse a new hope that would usher in an equal and just order. The vision provided by Rancière can be properly comprehended only if his eclectic research habits are taken into account: the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics cannot be separated without reducing the scope and potential of his vision.

Like Certeau, Rancière asserts that the strategies of the dominant can be tackled in the acts of writing. As fiction demonstrates a truth and includes reality, it empowers writing to wage a war against the deceptions of various discourses that perpetuate inequalities. It subverts the dominant order when it ruins the existing styles
and hierarchies. Fiction, believes Rancière, brings a realization of truth by transforming the pages of the book into living and suffering flesh. Thus his reflections can be helpful in making a nuanced study of the poetics of justice in Indian fiction. Rancière dismisses old forms of representation that stem from "the capacity of the organized mind to animate a formless external material" (*Flesh* 149). His politics of literature empowers the mind through a disorganization that would help to discover a fraternity underneath the world, where injustice prevails, to seek a new and equal order. Of particular significance for our project would be the idea of the power of the heterogeneous sensible suggested by Rancière to discover the politics inherent in the metaphysics of literature which "leads from the equality of human individuals in society to a greater equality that only reigns below at the molecular level . . . the equality demanded by the poor and the workers" (158). It can be said that the insights provided by Rancière can enable us to comprehend those embodiments of literary production that destroy the "community of fathers, the world of models and copies" to discover the "power of the Other" (159).

Rancière believes that social reality is "a reality of inequality" which the legal and political statements conceal. They also hold back political subjects from participating in a common world by not allowing them to create gaps. Therefore, the political subjects (women, workers, non-identities) create a disorder, a disharmony, in the given system through *dissensus* "against the hierarchies of consensus and passions of exclusion" (Rancière, *Shores* 57). But once the gap or space is filled up by the emergence and participation of *demos*, the site shifts. It gives rise to further *dissensus* and subjectification because a community of equals cannot exist without creating inequality (84). It may be noted, as stated above also, that Rancière makes it clear that literary democracy does not establish a permanent order: "it is the continual renewal of the actors and of the forms of their action; and . . . open possibility of the fresh emergence of fleeting subject" (61). Of course, art inscribes resistance required to restructure the order as it repoliticizes conflicts. Since the world cannot be socialized
by depoliticizing conflicts through a consensus, believes Rancière, the politics of literature becomes necessary.

Together Camus, Certeau and Rancière as the three principal modern theorists of resistance provide a diverse variety of positions from which it is possible to approach a literary text and understand the way it embodies a poetics of resistance. In the following part of the dissertation, we attempt to read the selected Indian literary texts accordingly. In the process of bringing the insights of aforementioned theorists of resistance close to a particular text, it becomes clear that each text speaks to theory with its own peculiarity and its own specific context. Consequently, the insights of Camus, Certeau and Rancière have been deployed in the course of the interpretations that follow in a way that we can at the best term as intuitive and tentative. In this, we have been guided by the conviction that literary texts 'resist' being fitted into the strait-jacket of theory.