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FICTION, TRUTH, POLITICS:
THE AESTHETICAL DIMENSION OF ACTUALITY. FROM ARENDT TO RANCIÈRE[1]

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Abstract

Actuality works in a medial dimension, in which the real only expresses itself, without referencing anything else. That of *medium* is a spurious space, loaded with cognitive and libidinal stains that the subjects leave behind in their relationships. Politics, in the neoliberal period, wears itself out in this context that has no links with stable facts, that is not shielded from human affairs. Starting from some of Hannah Arendt's considerations about the relational character of truth, it is possible to think of political praxis in this rigorously post-foundational context. With Jacques Rancière, we will then observe how the real, in order to be thought, needs to be turned into fiction: politics is a dispute about fiction of the common space, about how its material and symbolic configuration is imagined. But faking equality of anyone with everyone means in fact practicing it.

Keywords

Rancière, Arendt, mediality, fiction, truth, coexistence.

Resumen

La actualidad se desarrolla en una dimensión medial, en la cual, es decir, lo real expresa sí mismo, sin referirse a nada. El del *medium* es un espacio espurio, opacado por las incrustaciones cognitivas y libidinales que los sujetos dejan en sus relaciones. La política, en la fase neoliberal, se consuma totalmente en este contexto que no tiene conexiones con hechos que sean estables, separados de las vicisitudes humanas. A partir de algunas de las reflexiones de Hannah Arendt sobre el carácter relacional de la verdad, es posible pensar en la praxis política en este contexto estrictamente post-fundacional. Con Jacques Rancière, luego, se verá que lo real, para ser pensado, se tiene que facer ficción: la política es una disputa sobre la ficción del espacio común, sobre cómo se imagina su configuración material y simbólica. Pero fingir la igualdad de cada uno con todos significa practicarla.

Palabras clave

Rancière, Arendt, medialidad, ficción, verdad, coexistencia.

In the introduction to the French edition of his novel *Crash* (1974), James Ballard says:

> We live inside an enormous novel. For the writer in particular, it is less and less necessary for them to invent the fictional content of their novel. The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent the reality.

What could "inventing reality" mean? And most of all, what is the relationship between this invention, which according to Ballard is the writer's duty, and politics, which is everybody's duty?

If from a literary, and more broadly aesthetical, standpoint, it is conceded to thread with ease through reality and fiction or lie and truth, in politics it is necessary to exercise extreme caution: the principle of reality is often the only thing holding back the power's temptation of manufacturing reality through systematic lying. In her analysis of totalitarianism, Arendt stated that the dissolution of the boundary between reality and fiction produces the perfect servants, deprived of any political power and any contact with their peers and with the world:

> the self-compulsion of ideological thinking ruins all relationships with reality. The preparation has succeeded when people have lost contact with their fellow men as well as the reality around them; for together with these contacts, men lose the capacity of both experience and thought. The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (*i.e.*, the reality of experience) and the distinction between truth and false (*i.e.*, the standards of thought) no longer exist (Arendt, 1973, p. 474).

But to *us*, *today* it is important to understand how the scenery has changed compared to the age in which Arendt was writing, how the relationship between politics and truth presents itself, and verify whether this relationship allows space for a politically productive use of fiction. It's therefore necessary to check what our age has in common with what Arendt defined as the "total dominion" and how they differ instead.

The aestheticization of the scene

Our time and the first decades of the past century share a post-foundational condition (Marchart, 2007). In fact, the whole modernity has acknowledged that being in common is built around a void that has to be *artificially* filled. But while the Hobbesian answer was merely formal and nominalistic, meant to make the engine of the State work with the complete elimination of any purpose that is external to the system (Good, Truth); the late modernity will, instead, bring into play the resources of *mimesis*. Starting from Hegel, and Romanticism in general, the crisis of the ground is perceived as definitive, and in this precise historical phase "un spectre a hanté l'Europe, le spectre de l'imitation" (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1991, p. 37). The nation States seek out in the ancient times models to replicate – Athens, Sparta, Rome – in order to build their identity; but without a past to emulate, Germany (that never knew anything such as the Italian Renaissance) adopted, according to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, an eminently aesthetical strategy that consisted in the *building* of a myth, the Aryan myth, as a means of identification. That is where fiction comes into play:

> le mythe est une fiction en sens fort, en sens actif de façonnement, ou comme le dit Platon, de la 'plastique': il est donc un *fictionnement* dont le rôle est de proposer, sinon d'imposer des modèles ou des types […] à l'imitation desquels un individu – ou une cité, ou un peuple tout entière – peut se saisit lui-même et s'identifier. (p. 34)

In the totalitarian regime, the myth as a mimetic tool produces, far beyond Benjamin's aestheticization of politics, an actual "fusion de la politique et de l'art, *la production du politique comme* œuvre *d'art*" (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1991, p. 49). This fusion of arts and politics, this hyperbole of *mimesis* as imposition of a shape, is exactly the dissolution of the boundary between reality and fiction, with the related loss of any relation between subjects and with a common world, of which Arendt has spoken.

There is undoubtedly a continuity linking our age to the late-modern environment, when the germs of the totalitarianism that set Europe on fire in the early twentieth century took root. In this sense Foucault (2001b) shows, in a rarely mentioned essay, how it was in Jena that the main interests of our age were shaped. We share with the men and women of the late nineteenth century the same disillusionment: we are aware of working with and within the void. But, as observed in the same essay by Foucault, in Ro-

manticism the effort to bring the multiple to a coherent synthesis comes to its maximum tension, the dispositive of representation cracks and the differences start to leak out. The social ontology becomes fragmented and disorganic, there is the shaping of a paradigm that first glorifies the individual and then tears down this pretentious atom too.

On one hand, in fact, the romantic subject sees itself as towering, separated from the world since it is forced to experience the inability of the universe to accommodate the genius consciousness. On the other, the imagination – skill "discovered" by Kant, in which Arendt will find a political power – "disgrega l'ordine in una confusione di oggetti parziali, spettrali, frammenti, colori, brandelli di realtà" (Bazzicalupo, 2013b). It is Hegel who points out

> questa produzione di disintegrazione, di destituzione dell'ordine esistente, è un nodo, a mio avviso, cruciale. Il gesto negativo dell'immaginazione pre-sinteti-ca pre-discorsiva distrugge ogni unità (della Realtà, dell'ordine immaginario e simbolico) smembra l'esperienza, instaurando le membra disiecta. Emerge un soggetto out of joint che coincide con l'immaginazione disordinante: lo dobbi-amo prendere in carico in luogo di quel Soggetto della tradizione umanistica, feticcio fantasmatico che supporta l'ordine della realtà e si subordina agli inter-essi della vita.

The synthesis of the multiple, the project of which modernity consisted, gets harder as the production and proliferation of images do not simply populate the world, they *make* the subject itself. Obviously the spread of imagination will happen at a later time, after the tragedy of totalitarianism, and after the victory of liberal democracies. Shout-ing "*Imagination to Power!*", the 1968 will blow up the logic of representation, of the *reductio ad unum*: now alongside the crisis of Keynesianism – which brings the "impos-sibilità di una sintesi di linguaggio economico e politico" (Bazzicalupo, 2006, p. 106) –, the differences start disseminating, "il singolo vivente, attraverso la rivendicazione della propria differenza, rivendica la propria concretezza non più sacrificata all'ideale, riven-dica la corporeità, il corpo proprio che era stato disciplinato e normalizzato nelle reti di controllo sociale e morale" (Bazzicalupo, 2013, p. 65).

In this situation, the representation shatters: "the self-compulsion of ideological thinking" Arendt talks about, the manufacturing of a "fictional truth" to encompass the subjects, depriving them of any relationships with reality, becomes impossible. In fact, Politics now deals not anymore with citizens – legal entities framed in a status – but with

living bodies stating their wishes and needs, asserting their imagination. The engineering of truth, or, which is the same, the lie systematically elevated as reality, can't measure up against the centrifugal force of bodies expressing each its own unique truth. The subjects escape the representative cone and establish themselves outside of any fusional or sacrificial logic.

This means that truth itself changes status: it is no longer something transcendental, impassive about the experiences of the single subjects. On the contrary, the latter are themselves bearers of their own truth, they do not refer to anything external, and they outline their own unique and singular truth in the world. As perfectly summarised by Blanchot – who was able to grasp, not by chance, the idleness of 1968 as mere manifestation or manifestativity (1983) – "Je ne représente plus, je suis; je ne signifie plus, je présente" (1949, p. 317).

Immagination and mediality

Although quick and lacking, the *excursus* carried out so far has shown how in current social ontology the relationships between truth, lie and politics are such that the "ideological" dispositive stigmatised by Arendt (1973, pp. 460-479) will surely no longer take a hold. However, it is not licit to draw from this the conclusion that the lie is not a danger anymore and that we live in the triumph of truths.

First of all, it should be pointed out that the economical-political system immediately catches the libidinal push that takes away the subjects from the representative cone. Therefore, the productive system does not castrate but rather encourages this differential exuberance, this narcissism of self-exposure. The new capitalism has absorbed and bent to its own ends the most radical concepts expressed during the protests of 1968:

> c'est en s'opposant au capitalisme social planifié et encadré par l'État – traité comme obsolète, étriqué et contraignant – et en s'adossant à la critique artiste (autonomie et créativité) que le nouvel esprit du capitalisme prend progressivement forme à l'issue de la crise des années 60-70" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999, p. 313).

What matters the most with regard to our topic is the fact that imagination, whose negative aspect we previously mentioned, loses exactly this fundamental political power of destroying the existent: of conceiving the given not as a destiny, but rather as a con-

tingency that can always be altered. "L'immaginario dilagante, annullato ogni interdetto edipico, si manifesta nell'ingiunzione superegoica a godere, a autorealizzarsi, a lasciar proliferare la libera produzione di fantasie che offrano immediata soddisfazione e godimento" (Bazzicalupo, 2013b). If the imagery is the "surplus libidico che sostiene [ogni] assetto di poteri"; today, imagination is no longer able to dismantle such structure, since both – imagery and imagination – vanish into the dimension of simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1981).

In the *age of the world picture*, the age in which images propagate without overlapping any original given, but rather building the world itself as pure surface that does not refer to anything underneath (Ferari & Nancy, 2002; Nancy, 2002), the exercise of suspicion becomes problematic: there is no hidden reality beyond the ideological curtain. Modernity has thought emancipation starting from the idea of an original separation: the community, separated from itself according to the law of capital, met its own essence as something alien to stand up against; the liberation could only be thought in terms of a restoration of unity, a reappropriation of the alienated essence. The emancipation was the reappropriation of the truth hidden behind the ideological curtain.

It's hard to still conceive emancipation, politics in general, in these terms, in a world that no longer distributes itself according to depth and ulteriority, but according to surface. In the age of constant simulation, the fundamental category seems to be undecidability, that is the impossibility to oppose the fact to the lie. By virtue of all of this, it is right to consider, alongside Ferraris, the post-truth as "*l'essenza della nostra epoca*" (Ferraris, 2017, p. 10). Detached from any adherence to facts, and still imposed thanks to the "trumpets" (pp. 7-19) of the new media as incontrovertible truths, opinions constitute the dimension in which the whole modern politics operate.

Starting from this diagnosis, there are two viable paths. The first aims to rebuild ontology to make it the foundation of politics and ethics. According to this perspective, it is possible to conceive something like politics or ethics only on the basis of a univocal reality, taken away from the arbitrariness of the opinion. This is the very path consistently developed by Ferraris, who has been committed for years to the rebuilding of a new realism (Ferraris 2012; 2011; Putnam, 2005). However, it is also possible to think of a kind of politics that takes the impossibility of a legislative transcending not as a limitation but rather as a specific resource. In other words, although it is no longer possible to perform the unmasking, the tearing of the veil that hides or distorts the facts to make the truth emerge, it is still possible to break into the scene and disarticulate the relations of power and the effects they produce.

In the meantime, only incidentally, one could say that the "populist moment" (Cacciatore, 2019) identifies a phase of radical transformation in the political space that, in so far as it finds in Laclau its theoretical basis, conceives hegemony as a *strategy* rather than a truth (Bazzicalupo, 2010). The populist logic adjusts itself to the extreme social fragmentation which is the premise of the neoliberal scenery, and it does not oppose to it an identitary subject responsible of showing the real and coherent movement of history, but builds a front of antagonism that has rhetorical basis, rather than ontological.

Regardless, it is necessary to acknowledge that in the current neoliberal form – leaving out the question about the end of neoliberalism (Crouch, 2011; Fraser 2017; De Carolis 2017) – democracy

> con la sua legittimità neutralistica e procedurale lascia vuoto o quasi, lo spazio cavo, il trono dell'imperatore assente e sposta la sua invadenza dai luoghi istituzionali del governo al *medium*, la comunicabilità stessa, esattamente ostruendo, in dominio latamente politico, lo spazio che dovrebbe rimanere aperto alla interrelazione e alla politica. (Bazzicalupo, 2000, p. 7)

We are in a "medial reality". The expression is paradoxical, but it shows how there is no reality beyond the spurious space – loaded with cognitive and emotional stains that cloud the Habermasian communicative action – in which the subjects occur mutually to assert their own difference, their singularity. There is no reality beyond the *medium* and the *medium* is counterfactual. It is not compared to an external referent, but rather, as McLuhan stated many years ago, *the medium is the message* (McLuhan, 1964). The political life wears itself off in this aesthetical, medial dimension, in the emotional and cognitive surges that arise in this space.

From this perspective, Arendt's appeal to a substantial, factual reality, which is separated and independent from human conflicts, appears problematic: "in their stubbornness, facts are superior to power; they are less transitory than power formations" (Arendt, 1968, p. 259). According the philosopher, truth "possesses a strength of its own: whatever those in power may contrive, they are unable to discover or invent a viable substitute for it. Persuasion and violence can destroy truth, but they cannot replace it" (p. 259). The very idea of replacement suggests that factual truth might be somewhat safe, separated from the dimension in which human interactions occur. Arendt concludes, "truth it is the ground on which we stand" (p. 264).

Great democracy

It is possible to introduce a new theoretical hypothesis starting from cues offered by Arendt herself. Starting from the relational character of factual truths. Distinct from rational truths, such as logical-mathematical axioms, "facts and events – the invariable outcome of men living and acting together" (Arendt, 1968, p. 231) immediately deal with an intersubjective space: "factual truth is always related to other people: it concerns events and circumstances in which many are involved; it is established by witnesses and depends upon testimony; it exists only to the extent that it is spoken about, even if it occurs in the domain of privacy" (p. 238). It is *this* truth that, according to Arendt, is "political by nature" (p. 238).

This emphasis on the conditional nature of truth overturns the reasoning: in an exquisitely political logic, it's not the men who stand on the ground of truth, an it is rather responsibility of the political actors, not just in terms of its transmission, but its *formation* as well. In other words, politics exist because there is a narrow space between harmful and deceitful manipulation of facts, and the generative shaping of truth: it's

> the very narrow path between the risk of considering them the result of some kind of necessary development men could not prevent, and hence can't do anything against it, and the risk of denying them, of trying and manipulating them away from the world" (Arendt, 1968, p. 259).

The political action needs to make room for itself between the "coercion of truth" (p. 246) and that delicate contingency of facts and events "which is the price of freedom" (p. 243).

It's this very space that Rancière tries to explore, firmly proposing a knot between politics and fiction. To make this clear, it is necessary a short digression to go back to what Rancière consider the historical preconditions – the material *a priori* – of contemporary democracy. In fact, Rancière pinpoints what he calls an "aesthetical revolution" happening in Europe at the end of the XVIII century. This revolution wasn't acknowledged by political theory, or even sought out as a project by political praxis. It is a transformation of subjectivities that concerns their way of being in the world, of perceiving themselves and their relationship with their context. In this strong sense this is about an "aesthetical" revolution: it's about the sensation what overwhelms the senses, in the

material and symbolic chiasm that constitutes it; it is a transformation of the living forms, of the "ways of speaking and acting", as Rancière frequently says.

Secondarily, it is an aesthetical transformation that, as in the field of arts, reaches self-awareness, self-representation. In fact, what from this period onwards will be called "art", in the singular, is a set of practices that become identifiable within a new material and symbolic configuration of the common world. In order to define this configuration, Rancière refers to the meaning 'aesthetics' took on with Hegel, rather than to the one it had with Baumgarten and Kant. While the latter regards the field of sensory knowledge – an inherently confused knowledge, awaiting to be refined by intellect – with Hegel, and generally within the context of Romanticism,

> sous le nom d'esthétique, s'opère une identification entre la pensée de l'art – la pensée effectuée par les œuvres de l'art – et une certaine idée de la 'conaissance confuse': (…) non plus une moindre conaissance mais proprement une *pensée de ce qui ne pense pas*" (Rancière, 2001, p. 14).

"Aesthetics' is not, therefore, the sphere that deals with art, but 'une idée de la pensée selon laquelle les choses de l'art sont choses de la pensée'" (p. 12). Thus, it is the development of a new artistic regime of identification, one that Rancière calls "aesthetical", by virtue of which the objects of art are identified according to their belonging to a specific field of the sensible.

In the previous regime, instead, the "poetic or representative" one was the concept of *mimesis*, the one organising the ways of doing that make a work eligible of being considered artistic; but "la *mimesis* n'est pas la loi qui soumet les arts à la ressemblance. Elle est d'abord le pli dans la distribution des manières de faire et des occupations sociales qui rend les arts visibles" (Rancière, 2000, p. 30). This means that some practices were acknowledged as artistic within a specific distribution of the sensible which was hierarchical and divisive: manual workers are banned from both creative leisure and genuine political capability, as they live submerged in the blind dimension of necessity; instead, intellectuals are properly active men, as they have a vision of the whole, so they are able to conceive common purposes and the means to achieve them. This division of humanity is symmetrical to the one establishing itself in the realm of arts: comedy befits the humble, tragedy befits aristocrats, and it is tragedy's duty to represent a rational, no longer aleatory, concatenation of events that in their causal order trace a rational structure, with a beginning, a development, a fulfilled purpose.

La distinction poétique entre deux types d'enchaînement des événements repose sur une distinction entre deux types d'humanité. Le poème, dit Aristote, est un agencement d'actions. Mais l'action n'est pas simplement le fait de faire quelque chose. C'est une catégorie organisatrice d'un partage hiérarchique du sensible. Selon ce partage, il y a des hommes qui vivent au niveau de la totalité, parce qu'ils sont capables de concevoir de grandes fins et de chercher è les réaliser en affrontant d'autres volonté et les coups de la fortune. Et il y a les hommes qui simplement voient les choses leur arriver. […] Ceux-là sont appelés hommes passifs ou 'mécaniques', non parce qu'ils ne font rien mais perce qu'ils ne font rien d'autre que faire, qu'ils sont exclus de l'ordre des fins qui est celui de l'action. (Rancière, 2014, p. 22)

At the end of the XVIII century this partition of the sensible collapses, shattering "la barrière mimétique qui distinguait les manières de faire de l'art des autres manières de faire et séparait ses règles de l'ordre des occupations sociales" (Rancière, 2000, p. 33). The aesthetic regime places all the practices on an only plane and breaks down the walls that divide humanity and that assign each one to a specific place, a specific role and a proper self-representation. This transformation is the root of our democracy as it constitutes "le moment de formation d'une humanité specifique" (p. 33). These new forms of life tear apart the representative logic because they discover "une capacité inédite des hommes et des femmes du peuple à accéder à des formes d'expérience qui leur était jusque-là refusées" (Rancière, 2014, p. 20). Anyone is granted any experience.

Literature acknowledges this revolution "changeant non plus la mécanique de l'État et des lois mais les formes sensibles de l'expérience humaine" (Rancière, 2008, p. 12). For example, (and Rancière shows this applies to any 'hero' of this new literature, from Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway to Conrad's adventurers) Emma Bovary is "désireuse de vérifier dans sa vie le sens de quelque mots dérobés aux livres destinés aux âmes d'élite (*félicité*, *ivresse*, *passion*)" (Rancière, 2014, p. 28), just like the protagonists of the French workers movement between 1830 and 1848. As Rancière shows in a remarkable archival research (Rancière, 1981), they projected themselves out of the status of "workers", "proletariat", "laborers", men whose bodies and minds were shaped by manual labor, who presumably are not expected to think. Instead, they devoted their nights, the time reserved for rest, to intellectual activities, reading, studying, discussing amongst themselves and with their masters, they altered the partition of times, spaces and roles they were destined to,

they did not act as workers anymore: to reclaim the rights they are entitled to as workers, they take on an identity that is not the one of workers.

The most important point to our discussion is the rise, within the context of this aesthetical transformation, of a new fabric of the sensible in which, any axiological division being crumbled, all the entities coexist on the same plane without the possibility of establishing a normative and organizative principle that would transcend this very plane. Just as in the novels of Flaubert, Proust or Woolf, everything is on equal plane, worthless objects, thoughts, desires, dreams, overwhelming passions, moods, sounds, scents, ethereal sensations. Nothing is subjected to anything, everything expresses itself in a scene made of mere multiplicity, that in turn does not move forward to a development and a teleologically oriented concatenation of specific actions, but that simply expresses itself. There is only one cosmic concatenation keeping together the lives of everyone through "la puissance des éléments atmosphériques, les intensités du soleil et du vent et la multiplicité des événements sensibles dont les cercles s'élargissent è l'infini" (Rancière, 2014, p. 25). Rancière uses the expression "grande démocratie" to define this system of sensible coexistences "qui revoque l'étroitesse de l'ordre ancien des conséquences causales et des convenances narratives et sociales" (p. 26). This paratactic coexistence of all the entities is the *a priori* of democracy as it makes possible to disidentify, to create an interval regarding the place and role, the shift of anyone towards any region of being. Rancière defines as "metapolitics" the fundamental figure of modern political philosophy that aims to eliminate this egalitarian coexistence and reinstate a normative and axiological principle. A discourse of Marxian character makes political philosophy "une symptomatologie qui, dans chaque différence politique, par exemple celle de l'homme et du citoyen, détecte un signe de non-vérité" (Rancière, 1995, pp. 119-120). It's this very interval that metapolitics aims to remove, filling it through a reality that it locates in the social:

> La méta-politique c'est le discours sur la fausseté de la politique qui vient doubler chaque manifestation politique du litige, pour prouver la méconnaissance de sa propre vérité en marquant à chaque fois l'écart entre les noms et les choses, l'écart entre l'énonciation d'un *logos* du peuple, de l'homme ou de la citoyenneté et le compte qui en est fait, écart révélateur d'une injustice fondamentale, elle-même identique à un mensonge constitutif. (p. 119)

According to Rancière, the temptation of removing this interval is the illusion that it is possible to restore an allegedly lost unity, eliminate the alienation and erase the

improper element in which politics sets itself. The idea of a separation that must be suppressed supports the whole discourse of critical theory: separation between immediate experience and truth of the experience itself; separation between the world of appearances, the spectacle maliciously put on by the power, and the truth of this spectacle that that stands outside: separation, then, between fiction and reality. In so far as it boosts the political productivity of fiction, Rancière's solution may sound *naif*, ingenuous. It is actually based on the previously mentioned revolution of "formes sensibles de l'expérience humaine", a transformation that, when it fully deploys its effects, cannot be disregarded today: let's consider commoditized technologies like Deepfake, augmented reality experiences, wearable devices like Google Glasses or more invasive ones that promise a perfect symbiosis with the AI (Cuthbertson, 2019; Montani, 2014). All of this makes the truth/fiction distinction more difficult. The world of sensible equality is the one where emotions, dreams, volitions, desires and 'things' coexist on the same plane.

Fiction and truth

The very concept of separation needs to be reconsidered. On one hand, contemporary subjectivations wish to erase that "separation perfected" from which Debord starts, in 1967, his analysis on the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1996): they do not want to be in front of a performance, they want to be in it, be a part of it. On the other hand, this projecting oneself into the "show" does not equate the reappropriation of a previously alienated essence; it is not the access to a solid reality beyond the prism of illusion.

In the neoliberal scenery, as previously described, to be inside means to coexist on a plane of "simultanéité non coordonnée des choses ou des êtres, la contingence de leur coappartenances, la dispersion des profusions d'aspects, d'espèces, de forces, de fomres, de tensions et d'intentions" (Nancy, 2011, p. 90). This is how Nancy defines "struction", that is "l'état de l''avec' privé de la valeur de partage, ne mettant en jeu que la simple contiguïté avec sa contingence" (p. 90). Ontology of actuality displays the simple heap, the mass, the multiplicity deprived of synthesis, the *separation* that is necessary to touch, the proximity. Not the separation from the alienated essence, but rather the distance that allows proximity.

Now, this mere coexisting outside of any shared essence is, for Rancière, what makes emancipation possible: "la distance n'est pas un mal à abolir, c'est la condition normale de toute communication. Les animaux humains sont des animaux distants

qui communiquent à travers la forêt des signes" (Rancière. 2008, p. 16). Emancipation is not the process that leads men into meeting again in the element of truth. On the contrary, it's anyone's ability to experience a "dissociation", the opening of a distance from the place and the role they were assigned. An emancipated community, Rancière says, it's not a community ascribing its immanence to an original essence, a harmonious community, in which "chacun est à sa place, dans sa classe, occupé à la fonction qui lui revient et doté de l'équipement sensible et intellectuel qui convient à cette place et à cette fonction" (p. 48). An emancipated community is rather one made of "conteurs et de traducteurs", that is, made of subjectivities that relentlessly produce signs, open intervals, separate themselves from any alleged place of election. It's a community that imagines, that gives up the dream of obtaining a proper body beyond its own imagination:

> congédier les fantasmes du verbe fait chair et du spectateur rendu actif, savoir que les mots sont seulement des mots et les spectacles seulement des spectacles peut nous aider à mieux comprendre comment les mots et les images, les histoires et les performances peuvent changer quelque chose au monde où nous vivons" (p. 29).

In the aesthetical, medial dimension, in which politics sets itself today, rather than building a solid ontology to entrust with a universal truth, separated from the ups and downs of human affairs, it is perhaps possible to discover the political potential of fiction. On the other hand, it is not the science of truth that is necessarily going to enlighten the political praxis: "il n'y a pas d'évidence que la connaissance d'une situation entraîne le désir de la changer" (Rancière. 2008, p. 33). Fiction, for Rancière, is not lying: "feindre, ce n'est pas proposer des leurres, c'est élaborer des structures intelligibles" (Rancière, 2000, p. 56). In some sens, one can never get out of fiction, as real, in the Lacanian sense; to be thought needs to be preliminary woven into a symbolic and significant texture:

> Le réel doit être fictionné pour être pensé. Cette proposition est à distinguer de tout discours – positif ou négatif – selon lequel tout serait 'récit', avec des alternances de 'grands' et de 'petits' récits. La notion de 'récit' nous enferme dans les oppositions du réel et de l'artifice où se perdent également positivisteset déconstructionnistes. Il ne s'agit pas de dire que tout est fiction. Il s'agit de constater que la fiction de l'âge esthétique a défini des modèles de connexion entre présentation

de faits et formes d'intelligibilité qui brouillent la frontière entre raison des faits et raison de la fiction, et que ces modes de connexion ont été repris par les historiens et par les analystes de la réalité sociale. (p. 61)

Political praxis is therefore a quarrel on fiction: against the logic of (hierarchical and divisive) representation one can pit the fiction of the great coexistence putting all entities ('real' or 'fictional') on the same plane. But faking equality means in itself practicing it. Strangely enough, then, in the knot that ties politics and fiction, there is a politics of truth reconnecting Rancière to Foucault (Foucault 2008, 2012): not a universal, ontologically anchored truth, but rather a truth that is "testimoniale ed esistenziale, dove *logos* e vita, concetto ed *ergon* coincidono" (Bazzicalupo, 2016, p. 501). The political struggle, in the aesthetic dimension of actuality, plays out on the "effects" (Foucault, 2001), on the articulation of the symbolic-material framework. To paraphrase Foucault, fiction is not made for understanding, it is made for cutting.

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