

**Literature, Democracy and the Object:
From Lukács to Rancière and Back**

The idea of “literary democracy” can be traced back to the early Twentieth-Century, which this article does by looking initially at the work of Georg Lukács, one of the most explicit pioneers of this concept. His distinctly humanist view of literary democracy, I show, has resonances with other key thinkers, including Erich Auerbach and Mikhail Bakhtin. But it is in the contemporary work of Jacques Rancière that a more explicit engagement with this idea resurfaces. The task, then, becomes to trace the progression in thought in the passage between these two thinkers, and to evaluate the differences in their concept of literary democracy, which itself is bound up closely with a view of literary history. Whilst Lukács presents a fundamentally humanist view of the relation between literature and democracy, Rancière, I argue, puts forward a resolutely anti-humanist view of this phenomenon. This claim leads to a critique of Rancière’s anti-humanist position, which, as I demonstrate, has much in common with concepts of democracy in other areas of critical theory. The essay ends by turning back to Lukács’ work, showing how in fact this provides solutions to some of the problems posed by Rancière’s.

In recent years, we have witnessed both an intensification of the erosion of democratic institutions and the double-speak on the democratic idea itself: democracy today, as many have pointed out, is both everywhere and nowhere. It is both a master-signifier and that which, in the hollowed-out institutions of today's market-driven societies increasingly signifies nothing.¹ Wolfgang Schäuble's soon-to-be-infamous proclamation that "elections cannot be allowed to change economic policy" (qtd in Varoufakis, 236) perhaps captures the situation we find ourselves in under neoliberalism best. For what we have here is not only a disdain for the democratic process, but also a quasi-paradoxical situation whereby democracy continues, and yet means nothing, both in discourse and practice. What follows approaches this problem from the unusual vantage-point of literary theory. Those who would say that this is itself a symptom of the obscuring and devaluing of democracy in contemporary neoliberal states, have already come half-way to discerning one of the main arguments made here.

It is against this backdrop of obfuscation and devaluation, in other words, that this piece provides an account of two major theorists on the relationship between literature and democracy: Georg Lukács and Jacques Rancière. In so doing, we will map an evolution in thought concerning the relationship between the concepts of democracy and literature, one which begins with and maintains as its focal point literary realism, but also branches out to modern literature in general.² This will allow us to conclude that, whilst Lukács and other similar thinkers provide a fundamentally humanist view of the relationship between the two terms in hand, Rancière's work signals a break from this way of thinking. Rancière, we will propose, carves out a resolutely anti-humanist stance when it comes to the same relationship that Lukács and others had tackled before him.

The significance of the divergence between these two thinkers has various implications, ranging from a decline in the efficacy of traditional methods of critique to shifts in models of literary history. There is, though, a more wide-ranging set of consequences. These we can locate initially by analysing a problem in Rancière's work, which is signalled through an enduring pre-occupation with the object in literary texts and is in turn used as a means of articulating a specific type of literary democracy. But, far from entrenching the democratic ideal, the argument here will be that this ultimately constitutes a reification of democracy itself.

Here, we find parallels with two seemingly quite different schools of thought, namely Actor Network Theory and Object-Oriented Ontology, through which we will have occasion to detour. It is for this reason, too, that we will turn back to Lukács, the pioneer of the concept of reification. As will be seen, Lukács allows us to connect the reification of democracy with the broader picture of a devaluation of democracy within capitalist states themselves. But it is only by way of Rancière and other resonant thinkers, who are sceptical of the concept of reification, that we can arrive at a rigorous evaluation of this problem, which takes into account areas in which Rancière's thought is no doubt valuable. If democracy is to be salvaged as a meaningful term, then the argument here is that this must be done via a conscious effort not to reify this, no matter how much we love it or see it thrown back to us in the pages of great novels.

Demos and Form

In *The Historical Novel* (1937) Lukács attempts to outline some of the reasons for the appearance for the eponymous literary mode, in its classical form.³ The overriding external factors are, in his view, the "French revolution, the revolutionary wars and the rise and fall of Napoleon," all of which made possible for the first time an intense experience of history which was at the same time a "*mass experience*, and moreover on a European scale" (*Historical Novel*, 23). Whether it is directly related to these events or not, the emphasis on the mass experience

of history here is of fundamental importance; indeed, Lukács reiterates it throughout, linking it to class-struggle (ibid., 25). The way this feeds into the historical novel itself, then, is ostensibly clear, in that what is of fundamental importance here is “not the retelling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events.” It is everyday life which drives this form of the novel, then, as opposed an overt preoccupation with “the great monumental dramas of world history.” This is despite the fact that the latter may well form the backdrop of a novel’s own development, as in the case of *War and Peace* (1867), for example (ibid., 22-45).

There is a glitch in the historical novel, however, and for Lukács this is attributable to certain developments in bourgeois realism post-1848. The form, in this case, was severed from its relation to the present, and the dialectical development of history itself. Henceforth, history in the novel becomes a mere “collection of exotic anecdotes” (ibid., 182). The prime example of this is Flaubert’s *Salammbô* (1862), in which, Lukács suggests, Flaubert employs the same, neutral style as that used in a novel like *Madame Bovary* (1856) (ibid., 188).⁴ In both cases, the precise descriptive qualities of Flaubert’s style mean that external objects “have nothing to do with the inner life of the characters,” as opposed to novels like Walter Scott’s which depict ‘material things’ as ‘part and parcel of the lives and fortunes of people whose whole psychology belongs to the same level of historical development and is a product of the same socio-historical ensemble as these material things’ (ibid. 189). The obsession with individual details becomes particularly problematic in a novel like *Salammbô*, in which the relation between political forces and individual tragedy is obscured. As Lukács puts it, in *Salammbô*, ‘the political plot is not only lifeless because it is cluttered up with descriptions of inessential objects, but because it has no discernible connection with any concrete form of popular life that we may experience’ (ibid., 190).

But if the classical historical novel ultimately “portrays the *sunset* of the heroic-revolutionary development of bourgeois democracy,” Lukács still held out hope for the form at the time of writing. With the emergence of concrete socialist forms and revolutions – Lukács cites the Soviet Union and the Spanish Revolution in particular – the historical novel seemed to have the potential to tap into the “*dawn* of a *new* democracy” (ibid. 416). On this view, then, the historical novel realises itself fully in a swell of democratic feeling, one which is at its most intense in periods of actual democratic uprising.

Lukács’ book appears as one side of an appropriately dialectic development in his thought more generally, which begins with the ideas articulated in the earlier *Theory of the Novel* (1916), and ends, or is synthesised, in some later writings which deal directly with the subject of democracy.⁵ In *Theory of the Novel* Lukács had seen the novel as a slip toward restrictive individualism, whereby, in contrast to the older epic form, the hero becomes “merely a necessary secondary figure adorning a totality and contributing to its construction, but remaining only a brick in the edifice, never its centre” (106). To an extent, this idea is still recognisable in the description of the glitches to be found in the historical novel in its later guise. In this case, individual, particular drama becomes only obliquely connected to mass, universal, historical forces. On the other hand, the mass experience of history which Lukács posits as being the fundamental aspect of the historical novel *as such* suggests something quite different, positing as it does a direct relation between the totality of material circumstances and individual predicaments.

It is this tension (between individual and mass, part and totality) that frames some of Lukács’ later writings on realism. In fact, in specific types of realism we find a sort of resolution between the two different views of literature posited in the works examined above. More precisely, the focus on individualism which had been put to work in *Theory of the Novel* as a

negative facet is transformed into a positive one in these later writings. It is positive to the extent that, in this case, individual experience is seen as a gateway to the experience of totality or universality, rather than as an obstruction. Thus, we see the two opposing, dominant factors of *Theory of the Novel* and *The Historical Novel* united. But, to reiterate, this only happens in the *right kind* of realism. Two examples serve to illustrate the point.

The first are two under-explored essays entitled “Literature and Democracy” (1946). In the first (more substantial) of these essays, Lukács’ main concern is with analysing Hungarian literature, its distinct development from other European literature and the possibilities for the incarnation of a democratic spirit therein. But there is also a relatively detailed exposition on literary democracy as such, which runs as follows. “Bourgeois society,” says Lukács, develops two sides of a person – the “private person” and the “citizen” (“Literature and Democracy I,” 45). The individualist preoccupations of bourgeois society often brings about the erroneous view that the private person is the locus of human relationships, and that the realm of the citizen and of society “is constituted by objective, dead ‘things’, ‘objects’, and is not the totality and whole system of relationships of persons to one another.” Such a view itself can have fundamentally anti-democratic consequences, in that it trains citizens in a monadic lifestyle, dividing “person from person” (ibid., 46).

But this tendency can be smashed by the realisation that, in fact, the private and public are intimately linked, “and that the person who does not participate in public life and does not live the life of a citizen – also as an individual, as a private person – is not a whole person.” It is great literature, and in particular realist literature, which forces us to realise the interconnection between public and private existence. A “genuinely great realist,” says Lukács “never recognises as truly real that reified appearance” that sees human society as an objective state of things (ibid., 47). Writers like Balzac, Dickens and Tolstoy all link the broader machinations of society with individual, human circumstances; true realism, in other words, creates a “humanistic world-view” whereby “the duality of private and public affairs, of private person and citizen, has been suspended.” It is in this sense that realism can be said to be democratic: every private person is shown to be involved with society as a whole, to contribute on an equal, individual basis to the totality of human relations. This, in turn, is underpinned by a rise in actual democratic feeling and practice, even if this was unevenly distributed throughout Europe during the realist novel’s prime (ibid., 48). There is a snag, however, in that the work of humanist dialectics can always be diluted by naturalism, or the *wrong* kind of realism, Flaubert and Zola figuring as the usual suspects. Only a few people – Thomas Mann, for example – continued to uphold the old literary democracy (ibid., 50).⁶

For Lukács, this was hardly a surprise when considering the then-contemporary, bourgeois, formalised democracy. This is because this ultimately merely encouraged an inward form of existence, based as it was on a set of narrow class interests which disengage “the immediate manifestation of the people’s will” (“Literature and Democracy II,” 68). Bourgeois democracy stands opposed, in other words, to a properly dialectical, democratic interpenetration between public and private, individual and social totality (ibid. 76). The ebbing of democratic sentiment in the realist novel is thus for Lukács symptomatic of the broader, almost inevitable degeneration of bourgeois democratic politics, even if this did at one time contain within it the potential for an awakening of the *demos*. There is, then, to say the least, a touch of nostalgia about this view. Indeed, whilst this is surely a valid diagnosis on politics, it is difficult not to agree here with Brecht’s general criticism of Lukács’ treatment of literature, to the effect that any solution proposed in this instance ought not to be “linked to the good old days but to the bad new ones” (Brecht, “Against Georg Lukács,” 40).

The distinction between good and bad realism is itself a kind of surrogate version of that between modernism and realism in Lukács' work. For instance, in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1955), Lukács sees realism as figuring a situation in which the everyday being of characters "cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment" (19). In this case, the theory is pushed toward the question of action, or more specifically the subject's actualisation of potential in the world at-large. Realism forces the character to act on their external, societal environment, thereby demonstrating "both the concrete and abstract potentialities of human beings in extreme situations" (ibid., 23). Good literature, then, is that which shows our ability to act and effect change. Modernist literature, says Lukács, does not do this, and nor does it show the subject as part of a broader social totality; in its claustrophobic focus on psychology and the stream of consciousness, it forces us back into the private life, does away with action and has no chance of altering our view of capitalist societies themselves (ibid., 33, 36).

History

Thus far, we have explored the origin and articulation of literary democracy in Lukács' work. At least since *The Historical Novel*, there is a definite concern with the *demos*, with everyday life and citizenship, and how this relates to universally resonant events which affect the social totality. Literature makes this relationship perceptible, meaning that we are on similar ground to the two essays commented on above. But it is only in the incorporation of the individual, or private self which had been seen as a merely negative or restrictive phenomenon in *Theory of the Novel* that we get the fully articulated relationship between the individual and the totality, which then develops further in the more general theories of realism. Literary democracy for Lukács is not a direct depiction of actually-existing, bourgeois democracy, even though it is intimately linked to this. Rather, it stands for the appearance of the *demos* or mass as an historical force, freed from the constraints of individualism. This is what literature responds to, enacts, and what it can catalyse through demystification.

To say that this is a humanist (as well as a materialist) concept of democracy is to state the obvious somewhat. What will eventually become productive for our purposes here, however, is that this humanism is articulated in opposition to things, objects, and the processes of reification and objectification in general. Furthermore, apart from the relation between individual life and social totality, it is clear that another important aspect of this humanism is *history*.

Focusing on humanism solely first, we find parallels here with other seminal work in literary history and theory. Mikael Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony and polyglossia in the structure of the modern novel denote quite directly a democratic spirit, with the novel on this view giving weight to multiple voices (Bakhtin, "Problems," 26-7; Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 12). Form here is symptomatic of the broader experience of modernity; as Fredric Jameson puts it, the Bakhtinian view of the novel as a modern phenomenon is that which enacts a "democratic opening onto an ideologically multiple population" (*Antinomies*, 3). But it is Bakhtin's description of folk, carnivalesque experience and sensibility in Rabelais that chimes best with Lukács' humanist streak. If the carnivalesque is that aspect of feudal society which provides for the *demos* or folk a view onto "the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance," then Rabelais is *the* writer of these things. For Bakhtin, one of the key signs of this is the depiction of the body as part of a social, universal fabric; Rabelais' "grotesque realism" renders "base" bodily functions (eating, defecating, procreating) "not in a private,

egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people” (*Rabelais*, 19). The democratic sentiment expressed in Rabelais is thus one which brings together the folk through a universal connection to human functions. This humanist sentiment is made explicit in Bakhtin’s reading of food in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (c. 1532-1564), which posits the “joyful” acts of eating as figuring a situation whereby the human “triumphs over the world,” and where “the limits between man and the world are erased, to man’s advantage” (ibid. 281).

Bakhtin’s Rabelais thus performs a similar function to Lukács’ vision of the realist novel. In both cases, at stake is the way in which the individual stands in for and forms a relationship with the people or the social body at-large (in contrast to the more individual-based democratic vision Bakhtin locates in other work). This, in turn, produces a specifically *human* view of action and liberation which stands opposed to objects or things (food or otherwise). Despite these similarities, it is here that we hit an obvious stumbling block, in that each thinker is talking about very different modes of production and literary forms. Turning back to Lukács specifically, this raises a problem when it comes to the way in which literary democracy is related to specific historical events and processes, whether this is the French and the later Spanish revolutions, or the individualistic tendencies of bourgeois democracy (which, as was seen, is linked directly with the waning of “good” realism). How can literary democracy be tied exclusively to the modern, realist novel if such similar features can be identified in the earlier, grotesque realism of Rabelais?

Such problems are compounded when we consider that other well-known contribution to the theory of the literary *demos*, Eric Auerbach’s *Mimesis* (1946). Here, the concern with what Auerbach calls the “common people” is traced as far back as the New Testament and is followed through Dante, Rabelais, Stendhal and Zola, amongst others. What the New Testament figures, for Auerbach, is the moment at which the “everyday occurrences of contemporary life” assume an importance never before afforded in the literature of Antiquity (*Mimesis*, 43). The Apostle Peter, for example, was “of the humblest background” but is nevertheless held forth as “the image of man in the highest and deepest and most tragic sense” in the story of his denial (ibid. 42-43). Further, Peter’s denial is an event which, whilst remaining within the realms of the humble or everyday, is simultaneously “world-revolutionary”; as Auerbach puts it, “what we see here is a world which is entirely real, average, identifiable as to place, time, and circumstances, but which on the other hand is shaken in its very foundations, is transforming and renewing itself before our very eyes” (ibid., 34).⁷ Whilst in no way identical, the basic elements of literary democracy are all in place here, as they were in Lukács’ formulations. These include a connection between individual and world, the welding of the humble and the universal and the feeling of the march of historical forces. That the same basic dynamic – albeit in a different configuration and minus the religiosity – is later transposed onto the rise of bourgeois realism against the backdrop of the 1780-1830 period in France, shows both how near and yet how far Auerbach is from Lukács here (ibid., 473,491).

The defence of Lukács ought to be a relatively simple one. For, if a democratic feeling in the realist novel can be identified, this does not preclude one from being identified in other literature of different periods, arising from specific democratic uprisings. But this in turn means that we cannot say that literary democracy is the defining characteristic of the realist novel that Lukács has in mind. The problem thus becomes one primarily of emphasis, and secondarily of method. Lukács wants to tie literary democracy to a specific mode of production – namely, industrial capitalism, and with it the rise of the bourgeoisie. Whilst these manifestations may not depict directly the events which led to and sustained this class, they are still nevertheless

informed by them in the final instance. Auerbach, on the other hand, seeks to identify a series of shifts in literary forms themselves which only afterwards resonate with actual historical events. Thus, Auerbach identifies three main contraventions of the Ancient doctrine of “several levels of literary representation,” in which “everyday practical reality” finds a place in literature “only within the frame of a low or intermediate kind of style” (*Mimesis*, 554). The Nineteenth Century realist novel is one of these contraventions, but Auerbach traces other moments when this occurs, beginning, as we have seen, with the New Testament. Auerbach’s emphasis allows him to focus on aesthetic development, which at points coincides with historical events. Lukács, on the other hand, takes these events as determinants in the final instance, thereby ultimately tying himself to a narrow mimetic model. To an extent, the same is true of Bakhtin. As we will see, whilst Rancière’s take on this might initially seem to solve the problem with Lukács’ approach in a similar way, we in fact end up with its mirror image.

The Aesthetic Regime

In the interval between Lukács’ and Rancière’s work on literature and democracy, Jacques Derrida made perhaps the most famous attempt to articulate the relation between the two. Western literature, Derrida thinks, is in its modern form “linked to an authorization to say everything,” to be immune from censorship. In this sense, it is both a product and a condition of democracy (in its widest sense), in that the freedom to say everything both comes as a result of democratic freedom and provides the ground for that freedom itself (“Strange Institution”, 37-6; *Passions*, 65). Whilst Derrida does not acknowledge him as an influence, Jean-Paul Sartre’s view of literature is strikingly similar. As Sartre puts it, “the art of prose is bound up with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy. When one is threatened, the other is too.” This is because the creative freedom of writing and reading implies “the freedom of the citizen” (Sartre, 49). Sartre, however, goes further in suggesting that “literature can only realize its full *essence* in a classless society,” in which the full consciousness and awareness of the free acts of reading and writing – those apparent means without end – would become possible (*ibid.*, 120, 122).

Sartre and Derrida take a rather different approach to literary democracy than Lukács and Rancière. Whilst the former two are focused on the *general* qualities of (modern) literature as such, the latter are interested in the ways in which form and content interact with and dissolve into one another in specific types of literature.⁸ Although Rancière remains distinct from Lukács on this subject, then, in this sense there is continuity. This is all the more striking when one considers that Rancière never addresses Lukács’ texts which name democracy explicitly. But Rancière does address Lukács’ work in another way. A look at this will give us a snap-shot of Rancière’s overall approach to literature, along with showing how it offers some apparent solutions to the problem we departed with in the above section.

One of Rancière’s fundamental gripes is with representative models of studying literature and art in general, which are summed up neatly for him by the word “reification.” As he puts it in *The Lost Thread* (2014):

this sole concept made it possible to reduce the descriptive exuberance of Balzacian novels, the impersonality of the Flaubertian style, Baudelarian *flânerie*, the visual epiphanies of Conrad, of Proust or of Virginia Woolf, Joycean interior monologue, “modern” formalism and “postmodern” fragmentation all to a single cause, namely the commodity form that conceals human labour (xxxii).

Although Rancière sees (classical) Marxism and the social sciences as culpable here, the author he singles out is Lukács (ibid., xxxiii). As will become apparent, this is a somewhat reductive view of the concept of reification. For now, though, let it suffice to state that what Rancière means here is that these various literary modes have been hitherto seen as a pale reflection of that much loftier drama whereby human labour, and social relations more broadly, are concealed through what Marx called “commodity fetishism” (Marx, *Capital*, 47-50) and what Lukács later developed into the idea of reification (Lukács, *Class Consciousness*, 91). As it is put concisely in *The Politics of Literature* (2006), this is a way of reading texts that concerns “the way writers represent social structures, political movements or various identities” (3). In opposition to this, we ought to think of literature, we are told, as something which, itself, “reconfigures the distribution of the sensible,” and makes possible new ways of seeing (ibid., 4).

Rancière demonstrates this, and solves this problem of representation, by dismantling another, related representative schema, namely, the Aristotelian one. For Rancière, this schema involves the basic tenet that “imitators of soul choose to represent the striking actions of the great, the heroes and the gods,” via the tragic or epic forms (*Mute Speech*, 45). The Aristotelian view of imitation thus puts into opposition different types of fiction. Whilst epic and tragic forms are ‘the imitation of men who act, the lower genres are “devoted to the histories of people of modest means” (*Politics of Literature*, 9-10). Rancière’s mission is to chart how literature itself enacts a destruction of this model, “a destruction,” that is, of “the hierarchical model subjecting parts to the whole and dividing humanity between an elite of active beings and a multitude of passive ones” (*Lost Thread*, xxxiii). This is “the meaning of literary democracy:” it is that moment at which literature ceases to be governed by the principles of verisimilitude, and instead gives us a situation whereby even “the humblest, most nondescript being is granted the grand intensities of the world” (ibid., 13-14). The genre of literature within which this revolution in ways of seeing reaches its high point is realism.

This is because realism focuses on everyday occurrences and the behaviour of people who lead humble lives to such an extent that these become the centrepiece of fictional narratives. Interestingly, Rancière’s go-to piece of evidence for this is Flaubert’s fictions, even though he does refer to a range of different authors. Flaubert’s focus on details, his interest in characters facing everyday dilemmas and his preoccupation with style all mark him out as the democratic writer *par excellence*. So, for example, the barometer in “Un Coeur Simple” is not read here in relation to the Barthesian reality effect, but instead as part of an “equality effect,” which allows any object whatever “to trigger for any woman of the lower classes the vertiginous acceleration that opens her to experiencing the depths of passion” (ibid. 14).⁹ Or, to take a more direct example, Flaubert’s own declaration that “there are no noble or ignoble subjects” when it comes to style enacts a thoroughgoing dismantlement of the old mimetic principle (*Mute Speech*, 51). But it is not just realism that enacts this new regime of seeing – in fact, Rancière charts this at least as far back as romanticism, and on to modernism.¹⁰

What Rancière offers that is new here is initially observable in the way he constructs a model of literary history. This periodisation is correlative with what he elsewhere calls the “aesthetic regime” of art, which comes at the end of a three-stage timeline beginning with the “ethical regime” and having at its mid-point the “poetic” or “representative” regime (*Politics of Aesthetics*, 20-23; *Dissensus*, 173). The first regime is best characterised by its affinities with the Platonic prohibition of poetry, drama and painting on the basis of the production of false images. The regime is thus ethical because it is concerned with “knowing in what way images’

mode of being affects the ethos, the mode of being of individuals and communities.” In this sense, then, art is subordinated to outside considerations (*Politics of Aesthetics*, 21). This subordination continues, in a different way, with the representative or poetic regime. This is correlative with Aristotelianism, and is the same schema of verisimilitude which we outlined above specifically in relation to literature: in its hierarchical focus, the representative regime seeks to devise criteria of “normativity that define the conditions according to which imitations can be recognised as belonging exclusively to an art and assessed, within this framework, as good or bad” (ibid.). Finally, there is the aesthetic regime, which is correlative with literary democracy. Here, “art no longer occurs via a division within ways of doing and making” and is directly concerned with the “mode of being of whatever falls in the domain of art” (ibid. 22). The aesthetic regime, then, no longer places external constraints on the artwork, neither relegating it to the status of simulacrum nor subordinating it to a process of verisimilitude.

Literary democracy can thus be situated within a broader development of art and methods for interpreting art; a democratic sensibility is just one potential feature of the aesthetic regime, which encompasses a variety of art forms.¹¹ Whilst this is evidently quite an important innovation in the epochal valuation of art, it is not unique. In some ways, it builds on Sartre’s and Derrida’s ascription and linking of freedom and democracy to modern literature. Rancière views art as being no longer contingent on a strict ethical or representational regime, but as being instead left to float on its own terms, to say everything (in the Derridean sense) and to be an act of expression without constraints (in the Sartrean sense). As already mentioned, however, Rancière is explicitly concerned with matters of form and content, and from this perspective we might well say that he provides meat to the bones of the Sartrean and Derridean model. There are resonances here too with Auerbach’s model of literary history, which as mentioned is also concerned with moments at which the strict, Ancient delimitation between styles and orders of representation is troubled. But whereas Auerbach’s model seeks to locate these moments across a broad sweep of history, Rancière isolates one moment that founds modern literature and the aesthetic regime along with it. Here, we see how Rancière’s model of literary democracy is the mirror image of Lukács’. Both involve an attempt to locate the expression of literary democracy at a specific period in time. Lukács does this by making reference to actual events. Rancière, on the other hand, does this by taking actual events out of the question. In both cases, the Auerbachian long-game model of literary democracy serves almost as a litmus test of the other two models’ calibration of the actual and the literary or imaginary.

This is not to say, though, that Rancière does not make a link at all between the democratic development of literature and the development of the democratic idea itself. But this is only ever in passing and is never carried out in anything like a sustained or concrete way. For example, the critique of Flaubert’s style and his indiscriminate treatment of objects by some of his contemporary critics like Barbey d’Aurevilly came, we are informed, directly from a fear of democracy itself, Flaubert’s writings being seen “as the trademark of democracy” (*Politics*, 8). It would surely not be too far a step to link this to the long history of the general hatred of democracy that Rancière himself charts in his famous book of the same name. “Hatred of democracy,” as it is put in this book, “is as old as democracy itself” (2), and it would therefore seem apt to include the literary history of the saga within this more general history somehow.¹² Furthermore, that a writer like Flaubert, who was famous for his opposition to democratic politics, ends up apparently producing the zenith of democratic sensibility in literature is surely one of the most striking instances of what is called – in *Hatred of Democracy* – “double discourse” on the topic (ibid., 4).¹³ Unfortunately, however, we never get an integrated view of how these issues are linked. This is most likely because Rancière is so determined to dismantle the representative schema(s), that any outside development of the democratic ideal or of

democratic politics itself has to be muted, at the very least. Indeed, even to name actual events or other external factors as influences would appear to run completely contrary to the ideals of the aesthetic regime. We are thus left in an awkward situation when it comes to Rancière's work: whenever external factors are mentioned the whole model starts to get tied up in contradictions.

What ought to be clear by now, though, is that literary democracy maps onto models of literary history perhaps like no other politically-inflected sensibility within the theory of literary forms. Rancière is just as much an example of this as Auerbach, Bakhtin, Lukács, Sartre and Derrida. And what all these thinkers attest to, despite their individual quirks, is that there is undoubtedly a democratic spirit to be found in the literature of the 19th Century, regardless of whether this is seen to have begun before-hand or to have continued. Auerbach's model, whilst it does not explicitly label itself as a theory of democracy, perhaps comes closest to avoiding contradiction of the sort that we have encountered with Lukács and Rancière. But the relationship between actually-existing democratic uprisings and literary democracy is never really tackled in anything like a sustained way. There remains a feeling, then, when assessing these bodies of work that no-one has quite gotten to grips with the relationship between these two matters. Lukács in some sense comes closest, in that he is the only one who deals with actually-existing democracy in any committed way. It would seem, therefore, that the solution to this broad problem lies in acknowledging, firstly, that democratic shifts in literary regimes are generally tied to democratic shifts in (actual) political regimes. This does not mean, though, that there is a sole literary form that conveys this. Rather, each form will figure this in a distinct way. Similarly, literary democracy cannot be tied in as fast a way to actually-existing democratic forms as Lukács suggests. Any brief encounter with Rancière's work will convince one of this. Rather, it is the slippage between different ways of seeing and of doing democracy that should be the object of critique and would make visible aesthetic, ideological and conceptual mutations.

The above has served to place Rancière's work within the context of other theoretical models of literary history and to provide a critique of it on this basis, much as we did with Lukács. What remains, however, is to show how the jump from Lukács to Rancière in the way that literary democracy and democracy itself is conceptualised constitutes a significant development in thought. This will then pave the way to a final critique of Rancière's own system vis-à-vis its treatment of the object.

Objects

As we saw early on, Lukács objected heavily to an overemphasis on inessential or lifeless objects in literature, which he saw as symptomatic of a broader objectification of social relations themselves. This was the opposite of literary democracy. As we have already seen to an extent, Rancière turns this on its head: the indiscriminate treatment of objects becomes part and parcel of a democratic way of seeing.

We witnessed this in the reading of the barometer in "Un Coeur Simple." In this tale, the description of a lifeless object is part of an "equality effect." Something similar happens in Rancière's reading of *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), in which the focus is on the status of the cathedral itself in Hugo's novel. This, we are told, takes the place of "the arrangement of actions" or the "inventio" which would normally have been reserved for human actions in Aristotelian poetics (or more broadly the representative regime). For Rancière, the cathedral in

Hugo's novel takes pride of place, to the point that even the human characters appear to be "drawn from the stone;" "Hugo's sentences animate the stone, make it speak and act" (*Mute Speech*, 34). To take a third example, Rancière extends this way of reading to modernism, in particular Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Woolf's narrative is said to enact a "great democracy of sensible atoms;" it is not, in other words, the repetitions and insignificant occurrences "of daily life" which are of predominant concern in *To the Lighthouse*, but, rather, "the great coexistence, the universal life immanent to each aleatory configuration of atoms" (*Lost Thread*, 9). This is most evident in the 'impersonal' passage of the book (entitled "Time Passes"), which takes place in the absence of the Ramsay family and any specific human involvement (Woolf, 143-63). According to Rancière, this passage solves an overriding problem which Woolf had in focusing primarily on the family, which pushes the narrative toward a more traditional mode of narration and "the tyranny of the plot" (*Lost Thread*, 50). The impersonal events which take place in the book, then, achieve a counterpoint to "those that stamp the course of human life and individually compose the weft fiction: stories of love, marriage or death, such as the sudden passing of Mrs Ramsay" (*ibid.*, 51). What this passage ensures is that human life remains only a part of the atomic form of democracy which encompasses objects, people, events and time itself. It is not, then, as Rancière puts it, "a matter of contrasting the singular with the totality, but instead one mode of existence of the whole with another" (*ibid.*, 29).

There are more examples of this privileging of the object, or at the very least a mesh of human-object relations, in Rancière's work. The overarching point to make here, however, is that the reversal identified in the progression from Lukács' work to Rancière's is not confined to the topic of literary democracy but extends to the much broader arena of humanism. As we saw, Lukács develops a humanist view of literary-democratic sensibility through opposing the static treatment of objects in literary texts, and objectification in general. Whilst they do not actively engage with non-human objects, Bakhtin and Auerbach pursue a resolutely human-centric viewpoint when engaging in similar discussions. Rancière thus provides us with a corpus that is fundamentally anti-humanist when viewed in the relief of this larger body of work. Even Sartre, whose overall project Rancière seems thematically so close to, stands in opposition to this view. Indeed, it is Sartre's view of objects, specifically in Flaubert's novels, that means Rancière considers him an intellectual opponent. This is because Sartre specifically objects to Flaubert's blank treatment, or "petrification" of objects, just as critics like Barbey d'Aurevilly had done before him. This is, albeit, for a different reason, in that Sartre thought that Flaubert's specific treatment of the object was an effort "to disentangle himself from men and things" (Sartre, 101), severing language (as Rancière puts it) as a tool "of political debate" (*Politics of Literature*, 7-8). But, as we have seen, Flaubert's petrification of the object is exactly what excites Rancière, thus outlining again his break from a view of literary democracy focused on human emancipation, and by extension the humanist project in general.¹⁴

This division brings to the fore another, related opposition between Rancière and the works discussed so far. For Lukács – as for Sartre implicitly – the problem of blank description is also a problem of action: in abstracting the object from human relations, the writer perpetuates the view of the monadic, private person, unable to effect social change. Modernism, in Lukács view, does this too, but because it focuses too heavily on individual experience. In both cases, though, this is something bad, as it equals a situation in which collective action and social totality are elided. For Rancière, however, things are rather different. One cannot say that human action has *disappeared* in this model of literary democracy. As we saw in the example of the reading of "Un Coeur Simple," Rancière is still interested in (humble) human actions and passions. But these are not prioritised to anywhere near the degree to which they are in the

case of the authors above. Objects, of course, do not generally effect social change (at least in the absence of human intervention). To see them as indicative of literary democracy, then, is at the very least to obscure a vision of the potential for this type of change.

Could a *human* version of literary democracy have been articulated within the rubric of the aesthetic regime? All the evidence presented in the first half of this essay would suggest so and would further suggest that Rancière's prioritisation of the object is in fact just a quirk of his own (admittedly brilliant) theory. This leads us to a rather more niggling issue, in that, from this perspective, Rancière would appear to devalue human action as a direct result of a distinctly anti-humanist predilection, thus confirming, in fact, Sartre's and Lukács' objection to the petrification of the object all over again.

Reification

We can get to the heart of this issue by dragging the word "democracy" out of the specifically literary context within which it has been so far viewed. Both Lukács and Rancière, of course, do not suggest that there is a direct resemblance between literary democracy and formalised, actually-existing democratic institutions and practices. Rancière complicates the situation further through his admirable insistence on an anti-representational model. Nevertheless, for Lukács, literary democracy remains a fundamentally human affair, whereas for Rancière it extends to both human and non-human entities. Thus, whilst it is possible to claim that both theorists achieve a level of abstraction from actually-existing democracy or democratic sentiment, Rancière stands out in the history of the articulation of literary democracy as the sole person who abstracts from the *demos*, or the constituent power of the human itself.

Whilst he does not share their distaste for Marxist and left politics, Rancière is closest in sentiment here to the proponents of both Actor Network Theory and Object Oriented Ontology, whose work sits outside the domain of the literary. This is not solely due to the obsession these two schools of thought have with things and objects but also relates to the way democracy is used conceptually to articulate how these things and objects are part of a specific ontological vision. Within Actor Network Theory, Bruno Latour's famous concept of "a parliament of things" stands out (Latour, *Modern*, 144). This is devised to depart from what Latour sees as the illusory sense of being modern, the basic creed of which is that there are "two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; that of nonhumans on the other." But, as far back as Hobbes and Boyle (and the establishment of modern political and scientific theory and principles) where these categories were cemented, they were at the same time being crossed in all sorts of paradoxical ways (*ibid.*, 10-11). Hobbes' and Boyle's supposedly divergent theories are the beginnings of what Latour calls the "Constitution," a general, abstract framework which seeks to rigorously distinguish between human culture and the scientific study of things, whilst at the same time implicitly crossing over these boundaries itself (*ibid.*, 15). It is only when we recognise this cross over that we can acknowledge that we have, in fact "never been modern," and that a "parliament of things" needs to be created in order to develop a view of the mediated relationship between human and non-human actors. "It is time, perhaps," Latour declares, "to speak of democracy again, but of a democracy extended to things themselves" (*ibid.*, 142).¹⁵

This use of political language continues in Object Oriented Ontology, which is unsurprising given its self-declared indebtedness to Latour's work. What Graham Harman considers to be "the greatness of ANT [Actor Network Theory]" is its "return to individual entities" of both

human and non-human type. Actor Network Theory is thus “ontologically democratic,” with the added benefit that it has gotten rid of the “excessive prioritising of the observing human subject” which earlier schools of thought such as phenomenology had once engaged in (*Immaterialism*, 96). Harman’s own writings seek to continue this project from a specifically philosophical position. We ought to abandon the prioritisation of human thought and perception characteristic of modern philosophy at least since Kant. But, interestingly, this is not by renouncing the Kantian doctrine of the thing-in-itself. Rather, Harman seeks to show that all *individual* objects – human and non-human – are equally withdrawn from all other objects, that “every inanimate object is a thing-in-itself for every other” (*ibid.*, 29; *Quadruple Object*, 44-7, 118-121). All objects therefore deserve equal prioritisation: “a truly multipolar cosmos,” Harman states, “requires that the human being be treated as just one kind of entity among trillions of others, not as a full half of a dual monarchy” (‘I too’, 772). Others of similar persuasion agree. For example, Levi R. Bryant claims that “the democracy of objects is the *ontological* thesis that all objects [...] equally exist while they do not exist equally.” We need, then, “to think the being of objects unshackled from the gaze of humans in their being for themselves” (19). Or, there is Tristan Garcia’s attempt to construct a “flat ontology of things,” whereby entities are not ordered “hierarchically” (4). This, for Garcia, helps us consider what it means to be situated within a “modern and democratic accumulation of objects” (*ibid.*, 5).

The first objection to raise would be that these two systems (Actor Network Theory and Object Oriented Ontology) are like extreme visions of what Lukács had opposed in novelists like Zola and Flaubert, but in this case extended to an entire ontological system. On this view, ontology is more than it ever has been a dogma which obscures the inherently human relations involved in the circulation of commodities (or things). This kind of thought, in other words, places a distance in between our experience and our actual, material conditions. Benjamin Noys makes the point bluntly in relation to Actor Network Theory more generally: this strain of theory “seems incapable of grasping the particular form of capitalism” in which we find ourselves today (203).¹⁶ We are back, then, to a view of the world in which human experience, history and struggle is de-prioritised, as we saw with Rancière. And whilst Rancière’s work can obviously not be equated directly with the ontology of things, we nevertheless have an obscuring of human action in this work.

In all cases, too, we have a fascination with non-human objects. The shower of atoms that Rancière lifts from Woolf to characterise literary democracy is all-too similar to Harman’s void of withdrawal and, by extension, a refusal to examine objects (where appropriate) in relation to their entwinement with human labour and social relations more widely. From this point of view, we might well see Rancière’s work as part of a broader trend toward *reification* in current theory, one which is not limited to articulations of literary democracy, constituting as it does an entire ontological system. And it is here also that we ought to reverse the argument made by Arne De Boever, who also touches on Rancière’s similarities in this instance with Object Oriented Ontology. For De Boever, Rancière’s focus on non-literary, human, proletarian politics in his earlier work doesn’t go far enough in its humanistic focus. The work on literature, however, challenges “even Rancière’s own politics and the humanising impulse that informs it” (244). Whilst Rancière’s turn to the object may well produce a challenge to his previous work, this is a case of going *too far*, rather than not far enough. In obscuring human action, the political-democratic vision offered up here is at best a neutered one and at worst one which conforms to the ideological nature of the turn to the object in general.

Whilst this is surely a valid critique of the turn to the object, it does not amount to a critique of this turn on its own terrain. After all, Rancière, Latour, Harman and others would object here

that this very form of critique is exactly the problem in traditional political, philosophical and (social) scientific discourse: instead of viewing objects (actual or otherwise) *as they are*, the objection runs, traditional forms of critique either reduce them to a common denominator or subordinate them to an all-powerful causal entity.¹⁷ This is, ultimately, why capital and the realm of social relations can no longer be evoked in the extreme version of the ontology of things, as to do so would be not just to prioritise a particular entity, but also to disrupt the withdrawnness of flat relations. Rancière, of course, is not part of this extreme variant, but he does nevertheless regard this method of critique as wrong-footed for the same basic reasons, with the objection to readings based on the commodity fetish being just one example.

It is possible, however, to mount a critique of the prioritisation of the object whilst taking into account these objections. To do this, we need to cast our minds back to Lukacs' own account of the reification of the object in the historical novel and in certain strains of realism. In fact, this was done not to demonstrate how these forms are reflections of the commodity fetish. Rather, the descriptions Lukacs' provides of the preoccupation with lifeless objects focus plainly on their severance from the human, which in turn leads toward a kind of hyper-individualism, abstracted from any involvement with collectivity.

In this regard, what Lukács hits on is a rather more generalised form of reification, which is reminiscent of some of the ways in which Axel Honneth has sought to re-vamp this concept in the present-day. Honneth calls the realm of non-reified experience "recognition," which is for him a complex field of human existential care, involvement and acknowledgement. Reified relations thus signal a "forgetfulness of recognition." It is not, then, that reification *always*, or by default takes place, having subsumed our originary propensity toward human recognition. Rather, reification always remains a possibility, and can even become widespread, within a general framework of human recognition (47, 64). An evocative example of this is to be found in legal practices. As Honneth suggests, the circumvention of legal frameworks which guarantee (at least in theory) equal recognition for human subjects brings about an "intersubjective reification." Indeed, this phenomenon, according to Honneth, is widespread in contemporary capitalist societies, and can be observed freely, "from the hollowing out of the legal substance of labor contracts all the way to the first indicators that children's individual talents are regarded solely as an issue of genetic measurement and manipulation." In both cases, as Honneth puts it, "the institutionalized barriers that have prevented a denial of our recognitional primary experiences are threatening to collapse" (80).

There are many other examples of reification that Honneth cites. But this basic framework brings us to the nub of an objection to both the ontology of the object and its relation to the concept of democracy. What I want to claim here is that Latour's obsession with parliamentary language, Harman's (and others') vision of a democratic dispersal of objects and Rancière's emphasis on the democratic nature of the object in literature are indeed all examples of reification. But this is not necessarily (or just) because they fall into the trap of a ventriloquised commodity fetishism; rather, they take part *on their own terms* in a peculiarly linguistic and conceptual reification of democracy. This form of reification does not need to be seen as a reflection of anything else to function. In extracting the human core from the concept of democracy, it serves to collapse the basis of recognition which founds the very concept itself: that of the *demos* or people. This, in other words, is an inter-subjective reification at the level of language, or the concept. From here, we can observe the relation between this *conceptual* form of reification and its counterpart in the realm of actually-existing institutions. Indeed, the democratic institution under neoliberalism is all-too readily analogous to the fate of legal institutions under the same system, the character of which Honneth describes amply well. If

actually-existing democracy is being reified today through market logics, then the theory of the object provides a neat conceptual counterpart. We need not make recourse to commodity fetishism to view these two phenomena as part of a broader trend.

¹ For accounts of this, see Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*; and Brown. For the long view, see Wood.

² I will not be tackling the broader (albeit related) study of print culture and democracy, on which see, for example, Williams; and Benjamin.

³ My dating is based on the original, serialised publication in Russian of this text, not its appearance in subsequent translations. For corroborations of the 1937 date see Lichtheim, 101; and Kadarkay, 313.

⁴ Zola is another key example.

⁵ I am not alluding to the standard separation of Lukacs' work into different phases, a criticism of which can be found in Jameson, "The Case for George Lukács," 5.

⁶ See also Lukács, *Contemporary Realism*, 47-92. For a further distinction between good and bad realism see Lukács, "Narrate or Describe?," 137.

⁷ For similar points see Auerbach, *Drama of European Literature*, 34.

⁸ For a different take on the form-content relation in Rancière and Derrida see Robson, 98.

⁹ See also Barthes, 148.

¹⁰ On Romanticism see Rancière, *Lost Thread*, 71-92 and Rancière, *Flesh of Words*, 9-40. On modernism see Rancière, *Lost Thread*, 49-68.

¹¹ One of them being cinema. See Rancière, *Intervals*, 6.

¹² As Rancière notes, the word "democracy" (δημοκρατία) was originally used as an insult in Ancient Greece by those "who saw in the unnameable government of the multitude the ruin of the legitimate order." *Hatred of Democracy*, 2.

¹³ On Flaubert's opposition to democracy see: Flaubert and Sand, 243; and Sartre, 124.

¹⁴ Similarly, in a recent engagement with Auerbach's *Mimesis* and its reading of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* as presaging a "common life of mankind on earth," Rancière attempts to identify a counter-narrative to Auerbach's "humanist faith." Rancière, "Auerbach," 238-241; and Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 552.

¹⁵ For more politically-inflected language relating to objects see Latour, *Reassembling*, 75.

¹⁶ Noys also finds similarities between Rancière's objection to traditional methods of critique and Bruno Latour's (202).

¹⁷ See Latour, *Modern*, 39-41; Harman, "I too", 774-776; and Rancière, *Emancipated Spectator*, 39-41.

Bibliography

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. William R. Trusk. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2013. Print.

———. *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984. Print.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 'Epic and Novel'. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, Tex.: Texas UP, 1981. 38-75. Print.

———. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1984. Print.

———. *Rabelais and his World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1985. Print.

- Barthes, Roland. 'The Reality Effect'. *The Rustle of Language*. Trans. Richard Howard. Berkley: Los Angeles UP, 1989. 141-48. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Era of Mechanical Reproduction*. Trans. J. A. Underwood. London and New York: Penguin, 2008. Print.
- Brecht, Bertolt. 'Against Georg Lukacs.' *New Left Review* 84.1 (1974): 39-53. Print.
- Brown, Wendy, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015. Print.
- Bryant, Levi R. *The Democracy of Objects*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Passions*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1993. Print.
- . "'This Strange Institution Called Literature:' An Interview with Jacques Derrida." *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. London: Routledge, 1992. 33-75. Print.
- De Boever, Arne. "The Politics of Realism in Rancière and Houellebecq,." *Rancière and Literature*. Ed. Grace Hellyer and Julian Murphet. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2017. 226-248. Print.
- Flaubert, Gustave, and George Sand. *Flaubert-Sand: The Correspondence of Gustave Flaubert and George Sand*. Trans. Francis Steegmuller and Barbara Bray. London: Harvill Press, 1999. Print.
- Garcia, Tristan. *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things*. Trans. Mark Allan Ohm and Jon Cogburn. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014. Print.
- Harman, Graham. *Immaterialism*. Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016. Print.
- . "I too am of the Opinion that Materialism Must be Destroyed." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 8: 772-790. Print.
- . *The Quadruple Object*. Alresford: Zero Books, 2011. Print.
- Honneth, Axel. *Reification*. Trans. Martin Jay. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Antinomies of Realism*. New York: Verso, 2013. Print.
- . "The Case for George Lukács." *Salmagundi* 13 (1970): 3-35. Print.
- Kadarkay, Arpad. *Georg Lukács*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991. Print.
- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.
- . *We Have Never Been Modern*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

- Lichtheim, George. *Georg Lukács*. New York: Viking Press, 1970. Print.
- Lukács, Georg. *The Historical Novel*. Trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell. London: Merlin Press, 1962. Print.
- . *History and Class Consciousness*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. London: Merlin Press, 1971. Print.
- . “Literature and Democracy I.” *The Culture of People’s Democracy: Hungarian Essays on Literature, Art, and Democratic Transition, 1945-1948*. Trans and Ed. Tyrus Miller. Lieden and Boston: Brill, 2013. 45-65. Print.
- . ‘Literature and Democracy II’. *The Culture of People’s Democracy*. 66-80. Print.
- . *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*. Trans. John and Necke Mander. London: Merlin Press, 1979. Print.
- . “Narrate or Describe?” *Writer and Critic and Other Essays*. Trans. Arthur D. Khan. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1971. 110-148. Print.
- . *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Trans. Anna Bostock. London: Merlin Press, 1971. Print.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production: Vol. I*. Trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. London: George and Allen Unwin Ltd., 1949. Print.
- Noys, Benajmin. “The Discreet Charm of Bruno Latour.” *(Mis)Readings of Marx in Continental Philosophy*. London: Palgrave, 2014. 195-210. Print.
- Rancière, Jacques. “Auerbach and the Contradictions of Realism.” *Critical Inquiry* 44.2: 227-241. Print.
- . *Dissensus*. Trans. Steve Corcoran. London: Continuum, 2010. Print.
- . *The Emancipated Spectator*. Trans. Gregory Elliot. London: Verso, 2009. Print.
- . *The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing*. Trans. Charlotte Mandell. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2004. Print.
- . *Hatred of Democracy*. Trans. Steve Corcoran. London: Verso, 2006. Print.
- . *The Intervals of Cinema*. Trans. John Howe. London: Verso, 2014. Print.
- . *The Lost Thread: The Democracy of Modern Fiction*. Trans. Steve Corcoran. London: Bloomsbury, 2017. Print.
- . *Mute Speech: Literature, Critical Theory and Politics*. Trans. James Swenson. New York: Columbia UP, 2011. Print.
- . *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Trans. Gabriel Rockhill. London: Continuum, 2011. Print.

- . *The Politics of Literature*. Trans. Julie Rose. Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011. Print.
- Robson, Mark. “‘A Literary Animal’: Rancière, Derrida and the Literature of Democracy.” *Parallax* 15.3 (2009): 88-101. Print.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *What is Literature?* Trans. Bernard Frechtman. London: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Varoufakis, Yanis. *Adults in the Room: My Battle with Europe’s Deep Establishment*. London: Vintage, 2017. Print.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1961. Print.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.
- Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974. Print.