

THESIS

RANCIERE'S DISTRIBUTION OF THE SENSIBLE IN *JACOB'S ROOM*

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ABSTRACT

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This essay provides a model of reading which combines Ranciere's *distribution of the sensible* and *aesthetic* with Deleuze's terminology of *minor literature* and *affect*. In doing so I aim to demonstrate how Virginia Woolf's third novel emerges as her first experimental, or modernist texts, in that it makes readers aware of and subverts the arrangements of their own senses by dominant ideology. Though Critical Studies has successfully overcome the false boundaries between formalism and historicism, approaches to texts from the perspective of Ranciere filtered through Deleuze are largely unexplored, and can help the field develop a more comprehensive sense of how texts can transform by way of *style*. Thus, popularized Baumgartian conceptions of *aesthetic* as idealist can be alternatively reconfigured towards materialist vocabularies.

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As more voices continue to enter contemporary critical discussions, Critical Studies has become more aware of varieties of writing by developing strategies for reading critical language that functions to subvert the boundaries of dominant language and culture from inside. Such texts serve as “minor literatures”, producing writing in the same language that they ultimately destabilize.¹ Here I mean to demonstrate how Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room* operates as a minor literature in that it redistributes what is *sensible* by prioritizing style over narrative, insisting on the primacy of language over that of fiction (81). “Sensible” here refers to the material ways in which the body’s senses are affected, coordinating what is possible to think- *sense* refers to both the literal senses and ‘meaning’, both of which are material. In *Toward a Minor Literature*, French post-structuralists Deleuze and Guattari explain that a deterritorialization of language can be achieved when a minor literature disrupts associations already possible in the major language which it works in, allowing for a negotiation of power relations that allows writing to instruct readers in developing awareness of the arrangement of their own senses. In this way, minor literatures are pedagogical in quality, aiding those who engage with them to be more critical of ourselves and our realities. These transformative writings do not seem to have been adequately paired with Ranciere’s so far in literary theory thus far.

When considering how “senses” are arranged in Deleuze, it is helpful to maintain awareness of Ranciere’s usage of “aesthetics” as material first, rather than idealistic. In other words, Ranciere writes of *aesthetics* as in regards to “neither art theory in general or the

¹ Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Vol. 30, Les Editions De Minuit, 1975. A minor literature itself is defined as always identifiable by its three qualities: deterritorialization of language, connection of individual to political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of annunciation.

discipline that takes art as its object of study” as the term is colloquially accepted now. Instead Ranciere “extends aesthetics beyond the strict realm of art to include the conceptual coordinates and modes of visibility operative in the political domain”.² Hollander points out that though “few critics would still claim that the modernist novel privileges experimental form over engagement with social and political concerns, most literary histories have not succeeded in articulating how modernist developments in the style and content of the English novel reflect a transformation of the relationship between literature and politics.”³ When read together, Ranciere and Deleuze are useful for doing just this, allowing for reading how our sense is distributed- we can thus establish reading strategies that consider knowledge as constituted by “assemblages”. This key vocabulary term in such procedures indicates the ordered coordination or composition of our awareness and assumptions. Assemblages at once change/reorder and also can be reordered themselves by other influences. Deleuze points out that these divisions are fluid, ever moving; the bounds of what we arranged to be able to say and see are liminal spaces which can be traversed and are always being renegotiated. By combining Deleuze with Ranciere, it is possible to understand political functioning of art in that literature is politically transformative, capable of reproducing and making us aware of preexisting orders of thought, allowing for more careful

² Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. La Fabrique-Editions, 2000. pp. 86.

³ Hollander, Rachel. “Novel Ethics: Alterity and Form In *Jacob’s Room*.” *Twentieth-Century Literature*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2007, pp. 40–44. She reminds us *Jacob’s Room* is often regarded as the author’s first modernist novel, “committed to a theory of literature that recognizes the capacity of the novel to engender an ethical response in its readers.” In its stylistic negotiation of the relation between writing and politics, Hollander understands Woolf’s efforts as remaking the form of the novel, “Evoking the genre of the bildungsroman only to expose its inadequacy, *Jacob’s Room* represents Woolf’s first attempt to break fully from the traditions of Victorian and Edwardian realism.”

awareness and even subversion of these liminal spaces that constitute models of reality. A minor literature can destabilize the language it speaks in through redistribution of associations, making those which are expected both more easily visible and less 'universal', immanent, or concrete feelings than they are usually assumed to be. *Jacob's Room* specifically offers stutterings within its corresponding British-English major language that problematize British imperialism by destabilizing value systems "crucial to the maintenance of the dominant ideology of a society which was capable of sending 'young men [like Jacob] in the prime of life' off to their death on battlefields".⁴

These dogmatic modes of thinking are the result of assemblages in which art serves politics, because experience of the social sphere is mediated through 'artistic taste'. In such models (that of the dominant ideology), "'empty' words like people, freedom, and equality are circulating, and anybody can appropriate them to frame political subjects."⁵ Ranciere provides the example of "the Soviet revolution, [when] Vsevolod Emilevich Meyerhold, the Russian stage designer, attempted to fuse theatrical performance with political performance. The news from the civic world was announced during the presentation of the play, and actors and spectators tended to identify themselves as soldiers of the Red Army, too. It was a temptation at the time—the idea of an identity of the artistic spectacle and a communion of the masses." Such instances result in anthems and portraits in homage to

⁴ Flint, Kate. "Revising *Jacob's Room*: Virginia Woolf, Women, And Language." *The Review of English Studies*, XLII, no. 167, 1991. pp. 361–379., doi:10.1093/res/xlii.167.361. Flint's study, situated within gender studies, reads Woolf's novel as pointing out perceived differences between sexes in particular as enabling of this ideology.

⁵ Rancière, Jacques. "Aesthetics Against Incarnation: An Interview by Anne Marie Oliver." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1. September 2008. 174-181. He describes literature that transforms our thinking beyond these allegorical trends as polemic, "changing the forms of presence evoked by words... how we consider the physicality, the corporeality, of the words of the novel in relation to this model of the Word made flesh."

fascist regimes which are assumed to be transcendentally and formally correct or good regardless of context, which unify bodies under not just national regimes, but regimes of the senses. In these modes, sense is distributed so as not allow those affected to read that they are coordinated by assemblages. Thus, non-reading occurs, in which people can notice frustration with their inability to express their dissociation from their surroundings. Ranciere notes that Woolf's writing is especially pertinent in that it points this out, showing characters who (perhaps like Woolf, and of course all of us readers) do not have sufficient vocabulary for articulating the assemblages that coordinate them. We might be able to read the material effects art has in such cases, perhaps realizing the regimenting of craft and style that occurs in the artistic realms and citizenry, paralyzed in awe of the classical. Given more adequate terminology, noticing the political effects of art, or "politicizing art" as in Ranciere, points out how our imaginary alignments with human conditions produces real inhuman ordering of bodies. He notes Woolf in particular for her writings' subversive quality, as "she strives towards a language that eliminates its contingency, at the risk of brushing shoulders with the mad".⁶ In her writing, language is situated in ways that are not readily readable by the dominant logic he suggests entraps the western world; as such, users and readers of this language could be considered borderline 'insane', as their logic patterns are entirely disruptive of what is presently successful/pragmatic. Ranciere understands Woolf's texts as "forcefully laying down the political stakes of writing".

⁶ Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. La Fabrique-Editions, 2000. 53-55. When asked in an interview what authors he identifies as having escaped the dominant logic of the nineteenth century, "the Platonic paradigm of the democratic dissolution of the social body, by the fanciful correlation between democracy/individualism/Protestantism/revolution/the disintegration of the social bond", he points to Woolf (among Joyce, Pavese, and post-revolution French authors).

Discussion of minor literatures as pedagogical, might trigger recollection of *reader response theory*, the notion that meaning is not produced by the author or the text itself, but by the reader's own unique engagement with literature. Certainly, this sounds enticing for my proposal- readers are those being transformed by the text so that is where meaning must take place? This would be an incomplete view of the argument, though. Even if reader response was important for combating equally restrictive commitments to biographical and formalist readings that might focus too narrowly on the author or text itself, to suggest the reader as central in the process of pedagogy would devalue the role of the transformative qualities of the novel.⁷ *Jacob's Room* teaches by way of undoing the meaning-making that readers participate in every day, dismantling the idea that our own realities are any more material than those critiqued through the style of the novel. Reader response logic only reifies the materialism of the reader's own internal reality while eschewing the political ramifications of language itself.⁸ Ranciere explains, "There is something biased in the very idea of having words on one side and reality on the other side because words are a certain kind of reality and they create a certain kind of materiality... philosophical or critical task is to do away with that so-called critical trend, which has become nothing more than the discourse of a police order. It is to do away with the prophetic tone and with the plot of decadence that is only the reversal of the former trust in the sense of history and to focus on the existing forms of intellectual, artistic, and

⁷ Rosenblatt, Louise M. *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press (1978).

⁸ Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, MA. Harvard. 1980.

political invention.”⁹ In such a reading strategy as I aim to demonstrate here, power circulates throughout the assemblages which are both reproduced and disassembled by the style of the writing. In the terminology of Ranciere, “style is no longer a matter of ornamentation”. Rather, reading style in relation to sense allows for noticing of tension in the writing between our already-constructed preconceptions and their contradictory qualities. Certainly, this is not a deconstructive procedure, though, as historical elements, the reader, and the author simultaneously play a part in the process. Furthermore, Deleuze and Ranciere, as I have explained, allow us to move beyond the confines of a strictly textual or historicist approach.

Stutterings in writing which operates in minor literatures can move us beyond both the confines of the major language the writing takes place in, and also can lend to different kinds of reading than are popular in Critical Studies. This means that effectively, reading minor literatures as such is not explicitly advantageous in the present- such a reading strategy is not already readily legible by either the purview of dominant ideology or most popular critical apparatuses. We might say then that these minor literatures are called minor because they are othered in multiple layers. The “high” dialect of a major language would be that of British Imperialism first, and in the academic sphere more commonly accepted and appreciated modes of reading (historicism, deconstruction, Marxist critiques, etc.).¹⁰ Pairing Ranciere and Deleuze results in a practice of reading and writing that

⁹ Rancière, Jacques. "Aesthetics Against Incarnation: An Interview by Anne Marie Oliver." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1. September 2008. 176, 188. Transformation occurs in writing and reading that can “overstep the separation [that] rests on a simplistic vision of the opposition between words and things.”

¹⁰ Ferguson, Charles A. “Diglossia.” *Word*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1959, pp. 326–332. Ferguson introduces the vocabulary term *Diglossia* to sociolinguistics scholars as the first English term to explore a “particular kind of standardization where two varieties of a language

speaks outside of these dialects to an extent- furthermore, minor literature itself is not reducible to the language within which it speaks. Ranciere elaborates, "As regards otherness, I think that artistic operations produce forms of alteration in relation to the normal— or consensual—forms of sensible presentation, modes of linkage of events, modes of relations between a sensory given and a meaning."¹¹ Effectively, minor literature can thus be read as a "low" dialect; these writings speak in multiple registers, operating within an already multiple language (modern English derived from Latin, old Saxon, and many others in example of linguistics), suggesting that particular registers are learned as part of the language-acquisition process; these multiple registers operating simultaneously in *Jacob's Room* thus function as a multiple language (332). Consequently, the high dialects align with formal education and literary tradition, while low (nonvalued speech or writing that eschews value) is associated with early learning. Foucault's understanding of the educational system as similar to prison structures might help to understand why this distinction is made. Ranciere explains why writing itself might function differently from the formal education model (as much as I and other educators may still believe in the teacher's/institution's power to facilitate learning), "Intellectual emancipation subverts the role of the master; he is no longer the one who knows and transmits his knowledge but

exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play"; he makes it clear that bilingualism as the closest similar term cannot adequately explain the working of such systems, as they are multiply layered and constructed, also fluid in their boundaries. He explains that the high speech is regarded as superior, even as the *real*, while the 'other' is lesser, *unreal*, nearly considered nonexistent.

¹¹ Rancière, Jacques. "Aesthetics Against Incarnation: An Interview by Anne Marie Oliver." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1. September 2008. 185.

rather [that which] tells an intellectual adventure. In a lesson, you are supposed to transmit your knowledge, but in a fiction you tell an intellectual adventure.”¹²

The “grammatical” structure of high language is taught explicitly, while that of the low, of emancipation (a fiction in itself) is not. Minor literatures fill the pedagogical role of exposing learners to these low dialects, those which are in many ways *other* than the presently dominant one. In this way, *Jacob’s Room* can develop readers by combatting the habitual non-reading we are coordinated to be trapped in by the ways in which our senses are distributed by the dominant language. In this identity logic, lived experience is structured by stereotypes and misconceptions about difference that result in a process of othering. ‘Classical Knowledge’ stemming from Greco-Roman roots, biblical/religious Medieval “interpretations of geography”, and exploration habits lead to mythology systems that rely on impulse for analogy and justification of scientific rhetoric- ‘Darwinian’ systems.¹³ Within the English language spoken by the ‘superior’ position (or the ‘high’ dialect as in Ferguson), is a lack of a term like *diglossia*, only ‘bilingualism’ exists, a term which exemplifies the “stereotypical dualism”. Hall writes, “the stereotype is split into two halves - its ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sides (216). This structure is not identified as “grammatical in Ranciere, though, as in Ferguson (or deconstruction too).

¹² Rancière, Jacques. "Aesthetics Against Incarnation: An Interview by Anne Marie Oliver." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1. September 2008. 173-74. He notes that such transformative writing operates by way of “linguistic strangeness” that makes reading feel difficult and unfamiliar. Engagement with such texts is explained in Ranciere’s interview as active reading, encountering political and pedagogical material in “words that are not usually used for speaking about matters of education and politics.”

¹³ Hall, Stuart, et al. “Modernity: An introduction to Modern Societies”. Blackwell Publishing. pp. 208-216. 1996.

I would not speak in terms of grammar because I think the word presupposes a certain idea of artistic practice, the idea that artistic practice is structured as a language. I would not speak in terms of grammar but rather in terms of *poetics*— by which I mean the reconfiguration of the landscape of the sensible, and, in that way, I would say literature and the visual arts share many things in common. What literature wants to do is to change the relations of words with things, the use and meaning and forms of efficiency of words. What literature tries to do is subvert the way in which words usually function, convey meanings, and produce acts, and, in the same way, what the visual arts also try to do is change the landscape of the visible, the modes of presence, the modes of evidence of the visible. I would say that the visual arts and literature share a kind of common political programming, if we understand *politics* in a broad sense as the reframing of the sensory community.¹⁴

Woolf's writing exposes and pushes back against our current sensible programming, what can be thought, and articulated is limited by these factors. These limits lead to an inability to "read" ourselves and surroundings as assemblages and imagine anything beyond these standardizations that affect bodies materially by way of particular naturalized/essentialized (but certainly in no way natural) patterns of ordering of social structures. *Jacob's Room* especially reframes the "sensory community". The novel both points out the fluidity of these frames and subverts them through its writing style, providing disruptions of the frames themselves. In this way, minor literatures themselves are interdisciplinary in quality, noticed by Ranciere as being addressed to those seeking not new doctrines, but rather "but a new way of dealing with words—with words and meanings." He claims, "the role of art or the practice of art is a transformation of a certain state of relations between words and things, between words and the visible, a certain

¹⁴ Rancière, Jacques. "Aesthetics Against Incarnation: An Interview by Anne Marie Oliver." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1. September 2008. 180-81. Ranciere theorizes that emancipation occurs when art does not tell us how to use it; the crossover with reader response theory comes into play here in that the possibility for understanding potential "efficiencies" or applications of art are constructed by the reader/learner/viewer.

organization of the senses and the sensory configuration of what is given to us and how we can make sense of it.”¹⁵

The redistribution of the sensible takes place in writing that highlights an intersection of art and politics that Jacques Ranciere describes as “disturbing the clear-cut rules of representative logic”, resulting in correspondence between what is sayable and what is legible. Such disturbing consists of a blurring of what is marked on a page and the space of the page that the marking occupies itself. A *surface* in this model, then, is simply a specific distribution of the sensible, rather than an orderly geometric composition of lines. This is observable in *Jacob’s Room* by examining in particular the ways in which it “parcels out the visible and invisible” (14).¹⁶ As a result, Woolf’s novel can be read as an example of a blurring of the parts and roles of a community, as well as its forms of exclusion.

For the purposes of a modern reading of distribution of the sensible in *Jacob’s Room*, the senses must be examined as *assemblages*, rather than procedurally.¹⁷ By interpreting any system of truths as an element of a greater overall environment, sex, language, capital, etc., all become partial factors in the settings in which a body moves. This *affective* approach in Deleuze directly influences Ranciere’s aesthetics particularly in that his

¹⁵ Rancière, Jacques. "Aesthetics Against Incarnation: An Interview by Anne Marie Oliver." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1. September 2008. 174-75.

¹⁶ Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. La Fabrique-Editions, 2000. Though each discusses sense in a decidedly material way, the *humanist* concerns of Ranciere’s writing should not be confused with the *affective* concerns of Deleuze/Guattari’s, as a synthesis of these post-structuralisms would sacrifice the significance of each- The distinctions between them are necessary for a reading of sense that understands both its humanist limits and affective *qualities*. Ranciere describes art’s emancipative goals and potential, a verification of equality, which Deleuze explains as too immanently concerned with *quantity* to be directly associated with his own procedures (which again, are concerned with *quality* first and foremost).

¹⁷ New Historicist reading, as influenced by Foucault, does consider sense, but particularly as it can be noticed in relation to power within discourse, not as *assemblages* however.

discussion of the multiplicity of the sensible allows for Ranciere's understanding that any "egalitarian regime of the sensible can only isolate art's specificity at the expense of losing it".¹⁸ In other words, striving to solidifying meaning the political implications of art for purpose-driven ends will leave those particular qualities of art lost, reduced to representation. Furthermore, he specifically is then able to identify a particular aesthetic revolution in the nineteenth century that brings the aesthetic regime of art into being, which is described as a "system of possibilities that abandons the framework[s]" of recognition, assessment, codes, thus hierarchies of the *representative* regime of art.¹⁹

In reading, and at times abandoning these frameworks, the novel consists of a variety of specific feelings that are not actually communicated by any identifiable speaker, or 'sensor'. To accuse Woolf as narrator of what is sensed in the novel would be frightfully misguided, as she arguably couldn't do more to demonstrate through her style that investment in narrative is a result of particular historically privileged assemblages. Narrative and narrator, are certainly not foregrounded in *Jacob's Room*. It might be tempting implicate the "author" as a conducting voice of the novel, since the only identifiable "connections" between the observations being made seemingly at random in the book have her in common surely; however, as Deleuze/Guattari point out, any minor literature must function within a major language (16). Again, this means that *Jacob's Room* functions as arrangements of senses observable in the major language already. If an isolated psychoanalytic or even historicist approach was the aim, Woolf would be analyzed insofar as she *and* her text result from the discourses that produce them, leading inevitably

¹⁸ Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. La Fabrique-Editions, 2000. pp. 85

¹⁹ Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. La Fabrique-Editions, 2000. pp. 91.

to almost entirely biographical conclusions about the novel. Rather, in pairing Ranciere and Deleuze in the reading, we can consider how the text and author are constructed by dominant ideology, but also how they construct alternatively in a way that politicizes art. To be certain, the text of *Jacob's Room* must be studied explicitly, not Jacob's room, as the latter would not yield much beyond rumblings of the major language in which it was assembled- There would be nothing to say at all about the room other than what can already be. The literal space, though not fixed, operates by way of logic that might enable us to conceptualize the text itself as memoir. Woolf's nephew who she was close to *was* killed in combat, similar to the young man in the book; however, to read the novel as imminently fixed in a particular personal authorial context would diminish from the notion of literature as Deleuze and Ranciere explain, writing that is political (Nietzsche) and *not* personal (Freud). *Jacob's Room* is not memoir in that it demonstrates to us the inadequacy of "personal" thinking, this being just a symptom of rehearsed and essentialized logocentric assemblages. The writing demonstrates and promotes awareness that any one point of focus should not be assumed to be any more significant than its alternatives, "In short, the observer is choked with observations. Only to prevent us from being submerged by chaos, nature and society between them have arranged a system of classification which is simplicity itself; stalls, boxes, amphitheatre, gallery".²⁰ *Jacob's Room* alerts readers to the ways in which we, our attention, is structured as assemblages.

This is precisely the motivation for a reading that is informed by sense; Deleuze opts to delve entirely into the implications of a comprehensive multiplicity that Nietzsche made readily possible to consider in criticism, while Foucault, the premier apparatus for current

²⁰ Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. La Fabrique-Editions, 2000. pp. 90.

common critical reading, takes interest in pointing out and investigating the dynamics of particular discourses.²¹ The key difference here is that in Deleuze there is not room left for cause and effect oriented thinking, whereas in Foucault's work this can still be found (if only as a byproduct), even though this is certainly not the main point for Foucault; the productive elements of his work lie elsewhere entirely, in expanding Nietzsche's vocabulary of power and force to bypass misunderstandings of the terms by involving them in his assessment of discourse. This means that the addition of Deleuze helps to avoid the nineteenth century patterns of thinking that Ranciere addresses, those dependent upon dialectics.²² In order to utilize the parts of a major language to offer any new utterance beyond such narrative/dialectic modalities, a unique assemblage of the pieces that produce systems of truths must be noticed and subverted by a minor literature.

Again, to conceive of minor literature in this way, combining the terms of Deleuze and Ranciere is especially helpful. To read how an assemblage of the sensible might be at work in *Jacob's Room* particularly, Jacob is described only insofar as he is constructed by a certain arrangement of associations comprised of what already is possible to be viewed and articulated. While en route to Cambridge, a Mrs. Norman, who conveniently is not mentioned until this point in the text, sits petrified at the sight of a hulking, smoking Jacob boarding the non-smoking coach as he climbs into the seat opposite her. First, the appropriateness of Cambridge as the premier machine for preservation of the major critical British languages at

²¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, Walter Arnold Kaufmann, and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche.

On the Genealogy of Morals. New York: Vintage, 1967. Print.

²² Adorno, T. W. Negative dialectics. London: Routledge. 2015. Ranciere aims to reason through 'positive contradictions', highlighting tensions in writing that demonstrate desire to "rediscover within modern triviality".

the time must be noted, even more so in that in the chapter immediately prior to Mrs. Norman, Jacob's mother confuses Cambridge and Oxford, not really seeming to even care for a distinction. That both institutions consist of the academic prestige, ultimately within the same dialectic, makes them interchangeable for her. These places surely produce some impressive research still today, but it is clear that what matters more is the collectively agreed upon authority these places are instilled with by the public. Importantly, Jacob seems to end up in the coach on the way to Cambridge *because* of these shared academic sensibilities of his elders (34). In order to be a service to his country, to his kin, to himself he is pushed (and pushes himself) to align with the identity of a 'Cambridge man', an elite thinker and scholar 'worthy' of regard in the eyes of the people. Such drive constitutes a particular way of sensing and being sensed. To conduct any further inquiry of the sensible, though, the ways in which Jacob comes to be in Cambridge are not so significant as how he *became* acknowledged as a part of it.²³ Here no narrative follows apart from a certain string of relations that produces "Jacob", who is disguised as particular, assumed to be exclusively recognizable rather than mutually. The particular coordinates of such a relational web are hardly unique to this character, though- many others will attend the university, invest in dominant ideology, sit in armchairs with classics. Just like 'Oxbridge', the Jacob that fails to hear (or ignores) Mrs. Norman's "feeble protests" to his tobacco pipe is not anything more than a largely ambiguous or unidentifiable entity. In regards to Jacob's, the woman only recognizes an annoyance at the major language's (that she works within) inability to hear her (35). Like her son and every other young man that traverses the academic grounds of whatever University they do, Jacob is blurry, not entirely in her focus but still visible, just as

²³ Deleuze/Guattari explain a becoming as the "strict contiguity of two faraway segments".

any one of the not in any way specific pixels of television static that are all constantly moving. These pixels/people are only ever able to be noticed interchangeably and in relation to one another as they constantly change color, shape, and *intensity*.²⁴

'Who...' said the lady, meeting her son: but as there was a great crowd on the platform and Jacob had already gone, she did not finish her sentence. As this was Cambridge, as she was staying here for the weekend, she saw nothing but young men all day long, in streets and round tables, the sight of her fellow-traveler was completely lost in her mind, as the crooked pin dropped by a child into the wishing well twirls in the water and disappears forever (37).

Mrs. Norman stutters, lost for words in her fear of Jacob when he enters the coach. She realizes nothing she could say would be specific to him or the effects his presence has on her. She herself even becomes exceedingly ambiguous throughout the chapter, as Mrs. Norman is never described in any way, rather is readable only as a general identifier in relation to other signs that are just as unspecific. *Jacob's Room* pushes back against the "idea of a language that would speak to all the senses. You cannot call this literalism. For it involves not only the fact that your sentence is taken at its word or at face value but also the idea of words becoming more than words. In what you call literalism, in a certain way, words remain words, but in many political or literary dreams and, of course, in religion, the distance of the word is supposed to be abolished; the letter disappears in its spirit, the spirit becomes flesh. It is a matter of transformation as if precisely there were a kind of sensory reality that would abolish the very distance between words and things and also the distance between one speaker and another speaker."²⁵

²⁴ Intensities in Deleuze as they operate within becoming are understood as culminations of what is sensible in a way that reveals to the senses their current limits.

²⁵ Rancière, Jacques. "Aesthetics Against Incarnation: An Interview by Anne Marie Oliver." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1. September 2008. 176-79. Woolf's writing could be compared

The blurring of speakers, the members of the community, here functions to blend the political into the text itself, each member of society becoming more unrecognizable in their becoming of a policing force for homogeneity. Note that policing forces are not only recognizable in those that claim this occupation, but more importantly in the general public, who have internalized a guilty impulse to monitor and order themselves and also others in accordance with collectively rehearsed expectations. Ranciere notices a shared “common characteristic of an empty operator” in these identified, but not identifiable subjects (95). In *Jacob's Room* this surveillance manifests most blatantly in gatherings of communities, instances in which what can be sensed is demonstrated, as in Deleuze. At a social gathering featuring characters vaguely connected back to Jacob through his name floating through their discussions briefly, Mrs. Durrant recognizes him as “the silent young man” that Miss Eliot is reminded of by the stars, which she has “read about”. It is unclear, though, whether Mrs. Durrant is recognizing the same young man as Miss Eliot, who the line before utters “Timothy” (78). Further muddying the distinctions between the men, this utterance of Timothy could be in response to his arrival in Miss Eliot’s purview physically as she walks down the staircase beside Mrs. Durrant. Alternatively, it could be invoked by association to Jacob through discussion of the stars that she gazes up through the window at during her exchange of words with her peers. In any case, an arrangement of equality is constructed here by Miss Eliot because of her multiple naming and unclear referencing of the men. As

then to her contemporary, Proust, who’s *style* she admired, in that the two “create a form of discourse that is an analogue of what would be a print made by sensation, the equivalent of the text written by sensation.” In other words, writing that stylistically transforms our sensibilities, “threads its way between [its] own dream, the dream of the book written by sensation, and the patriotic dream of the time, the dream of the collectivity, of a writing that would be the flesh of its living spirit,” both speaking in the low dialect of subversion, and within the major language it subverts (Imperial English, French, etc.).

Ranciere describes, writing can draw attention to the policing power of equality in that it enforces homogeneity. Still, this passage from *Jacob's Room* goes beyond reproducing these trends, demonstrating *tension* between an urge to police in the name of democracy and a collective desire for narrative. The generalities produced in the prior example are at odds with storytelling; dialectic cannot function without particulars. This problematizes dominant ideology, which is committed to both such policing structures, and also justification of their existence by way of dialectics, relying on the narrating of tales of justice and correction.

The problematizing of these contradictory tendencies of the major language the text speaks in is a result of prioritization of style. Sentence-level organization of the young men's names in the discussion mentioned above are arranged as part of an assemblage that is not reducible to any single clear narrative. Possible linear narratives are suggested by the introduction of these people, however none are consistently developed, and so narration is stylistically blocked from happening. The sentences bounce between referents in disorienting fashion, never developing either Jacob or Timothy.

Instead of Miss Eliot and Mrs. Durrant's conversation following Timothy or Jacob coherently, the two mix their names beyond recognition and refer to the men with vague pronouns, leading the ever-meandering focus of the chapter back to the stars. These suns of other galaxies operate similarly to the two men, a smattering of vaguely related points that only can be identified in that one can be recognized in relation to another though none have clear defining features from our perspective here on earth (with exception of our own sun of course). Often in this novel, objects are focused on much more consistently than any character, as characters are often addressed tangentially through objects in similar fashions

to this example; the text is thus transformative of the distributed sensibilities of the dominant ideology in that it directs attention to human subjects as dependent on association, existing only as elements of a larger metonymic habit that comprises the legible. In other words, readers are made aware of our habits of humanist allegory that place people at center. We can be made uncomfortable and lost because the book does not guide us through a story that supposedly is representative of greater universal themes. In this way, the text is directly instructing, teaching reading of our own conditions.

Characters in the novel experience similar disorientation, such as Mr. Erksine, who grasps at some foundation to appease feelings of inadequacy. As a lost reader would, the man attempts to locate constants, definitive truths to cling to for solace. He interjects into a conversation regarding a recent death (which the group is comparing to silence in this context) at a social gathering. He claims silence does not exist, arguing that beyond human voices he hears at least twenty other sounds in a given day, ranging from “the sea” to “the wind”. Mr. Erksine tries to curtail and thus escape a discussion of the possibility of nothingness by insisting upon transcendent presences, those he assumes will always be (even if they may not). Here the inescapability of a distribution of the sensible is demonstrated. These elements of the universe that supposedly supersede humanity become, in this model, only rumblings of the associative logic that humanity is conditioned by- in his argument they are only a flimsy tool to escape having to consider something he cannot conceptualize, though Mr. Erksine likely does really believe that his very limited experience is enough to summarize universality. As these always present associations ring in Elsbeth’s ear, she gazes into the telescope wondering, “Cassiopeia, where are you all?”

(79).²⁶ She tries in vain to find a force in the universe that can give substance, or some unique texture to the names she hears being scrambled in the room around her, though she cannot. This is ultimately a failure to read beyond what is already readable, as the woman becomes mesmerized by the lack of distinctive features or presence noticeable in any of her companions. She is stunned at the realization that her senses are what comprise the cosmological makeup of her vision and voice, and thus cannot articulate her feelings of lack when she attempts to notice something beyond what she can already.

In this way, community functions as a political force in which each member of a community monitors and regulates one another, is complicit in reproducing the dominant structure of the community as a whole, by limiting what is sayable through restrictions placed on what is legible for the purposes of “equality, or democracy”.²⁷ This limiting is conjecturally made possible in a community only through the major language that constitutes the bodies that comprise the society. It is only through an interruption of this language that a new variety of writing can occur, the minor literature. In the case of *Jacob's Room*, likening the people gathered in the room to the stars brings the tension in a system that depends upon competing rhetoric of the universal and individual. Woolf's writing is operating subversively because the major English language in which the writing operates traditionally cannot already recognize that senses are assemblages of these tensions. The text is thus instructional in that such tensions can be explained and explored once the limits

²⁶ In Greek mythology, Cassiopeia invokes the wrath of Poseidon because of her unmediated vanity.

²⁷ For this reason, democracy is impossible in Ranciere's theory of distribution of the sensible, since equality (as explained by Deleuze) always implies a focus on *quantity*, rather than *quality*. Though textuality and context certainly are not quantifiable either, Deleuze points out that these are encompassed by what is sensible, which can only be discussed in terms of quality.

of the major discourse are identified (insinuating there might be something possible *outside* of this major register, a notion that the characters' assemblages won't permit).

To explain the disruptive quality of a minor literature functioning within this major British English language, *Jacob's Room* can be understood as a gathering of "descriptive textual units that, rather than presenting an image of fixed pictorial stability, instead present a kind of kinetic dismantling of their own borders".²⁸ Each image of what is sensible in the novel is certainly framed, but the texture of pictures is constantly in motion within and out of the frame. The frames themselves are similarly fluid. The image of the Queen of England, for example, is surely present in the following picture described in the novel- physically framed by the borders of the page, soon to be turned, and also by a constantly changing London cityscape, a white glove absent of a body or face reaches for scarlet flowers from within a royal household (yet another frame). This iconography of the glove, when framed by a royal residence of modern London midday, evokes imagery of the Queen, even if the body and face attached to the glove that we cannot see are not hers. Still, sentiments of the major discourse are sparked, as the Queen is recognized as "a name worth dying for", one that fixes bodies in place amongst chaos. It is a name that is *valued*, as in its presence, social order is clear, the esteemed royalty, the gentry, the labor force, the vagrant, and so on. The Queen, the "Empire", limits bodies within a model of writing as they can only be valued in relation to it; one may either wish to embody the Queen, sit beside her, or live in exile from her. There are no alternatives. All are delineated by their association with the Empire, even

²⁸ Kazan, Francesca. "Description and the Pictorial in Jacob's Room." *Elh*, vol. 55, no. 3, 1988, p. 701. doi:10.2307/2873190. Kazan notes that Woolf herself acknowledged this aspect of her writing in *A Writer's Diary*, "Now is life very solid or very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions".

the subjected colonies who are elsewhere geographically. The novel shows these ‘decisions’ as false options, “moulds” that are filled and refilled constantly, but ones that are not distinguishable in significant detail. The glove is not exclusive from others anyway; like replaceable laborers they just have to fit into the assemblage to create the proper ensemble or image of the Empire. If there is any substance present here, it revolves entirely around modes of false necessity; through this process sense is produced by repetitions that are not self-identical. It is important to understand that the “moulds” being filled only exist insofar as they are rehearsed; they are absolutely a result of neurotic bodies attempting to achieve a fixed state, rather than transcendent roles for societal function or representations of forms that can describe society as it must be in regards to some ‘natural order’. Much like the glove without a face reaching for a bouquet to whom we can never hope to know was addressed in the first place, any potential stagnation or solidification of images that depict bodies filling roles is impossible to describe in any way besides its neighboring details. For Britain, these details might be the impermanent boundaries between it and the Irish nation state to the west, or that of Scotland to the north. Meaning becomes impossible to establish and preserve because the details with which to identify them are always moving. Those who see the glove probably are just desperate to align themselves more closely with royalty, the presently privileged group; if English people can say they have been in close proximity to the Queen, they are further from the scorned exiled (who still are ironically defined by their connection to the place they cannot go).

A stuttering in nationalism occurs here particularly in the paradoxical position of exile. In the case of a subject being banished away from the Empire, an imperial grasp is maintained on the exiled, though at arm’s length to be sure. That this grasp is not necessarily

different from that maintained over those that for example remain in close proximity to the Queen indicates a disruption of the dominant language of British English imperialism- we would think Londoners and the banished should be more different. That this assumption of dominant language that the novel works within understands the banished and those still 'of' London as dissimilar indicates a literacy of quantity, in which value for stability can be counted, measured, and so monitored and literally regulated.

Instead, in the novel, quality is foregrounded, since all seemingly separate options are observed as similar (the highest meaning in society the Queen can be reduced to a random glove reaching to roses, etc.) . The material limits of the text are readable ultimately like those of the book in print itself- each page "evokes both the light of the crepuscule, that time when objects in space are extraordinarily defined before dissolving into dusk, and the haze of the mist, where, too, all becomes blurred and indistinct" (704).²⁹ Typed letters on the page are exposed to the light and achieve a fixed position in which the white space between letters is apparent when the reader props the page open for a moment before turning to another, just before the markings disappear into a gray mass as the spaces between them become unidentifiable upon closing.

Every face, every shop, bedroom window, public-house, and dark square is a picture feverishly turned- in search of what? It is the same with books. What do we seek through millions of pages? Still hopefully turning the pages- oh, here is Jacob's room. (132)

²⁹ The use of the term 'limits' here even functions paradoxically, as Kazan points out, since these limits are not "narrowing and restricting" in quality, but "yielding instead". This notion is surely commensurate with any model that notices bodies as affected by textuality, narrative, or sense. Though Kazan prioritizes narrative, sense will be more adequate in examining texts as assemblages, since narrative is simply an arrangement of what is sensible.

In motion, the book's pages communicate its proclaimed context throughout, 'Jacob's room' appearing and reappearing with dissolving of pages into their prior as they are folded back by the learner. Because Jacob's name is printed on the dust jacket, it would seem that at least this mark/symbol might remain more fixed ('protagonist!'); as Kazan recognizes, this is not the case, since we never are given "a clear picture of Jacob by any means". Even the name Jacob, which the novel wears as a badge on its covering, is not itself distinguishable from any of the other mostly undescribed characters.³⁰ Jacob himself even experiences the realization that he is painfully indistinguishable and ordinary, mourning that it is not "catastrophes, murders, deaths, diseases, that age and kill us; it's the way people look and laugh, and run up the steps of omnibuses" (111). Here, frustration with the dispersal of a literal 'common sense' throughout society manifests in lament over the interchangeability of people, a lack or death of fetishized singularity- structures of capital like those Jacob lives in perpetuate 'survival of the fittest' notions that promote 'individuality' as a means to freedom, yet each 'individual' is hardly distinguishable from one another beyond their collective service to the nation. This contradiction is difficult for Jacob to negotiate. These notions are only means to securing power in the present, a sure way to continued entrapment in presentism. Jacob and the other characters of the novel, like us, simply do not enjoy the lingual capacity to escape such identity logic. The novel is unmistakably modernist, "Turning nineteenth-century realism's faith in progress and the ultimate

³⁰ Rosner, Victoria. *The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*. Cambridge University Press, 2014. Woolf's sister, British modernist painter Vanessa Bell's original cover for *Jacob's Room* featured a vase of flowers framed by a curtain, quite simply an image of an object, whereas the more contemporary cover features a gathering of young men around tea, any of which could be (or just as easily might not be) Jacob.

knowability of others on its head, the novel suggests instead that the attempt to understand the other in terms of the self only produces more ignorance and confusion.”³¹

Not only could Jacob’s realization of inadequacy and insignificance have come to anyone, but a large part of our collective frustration is, that it most likely has and will continue to; even if some bodies were somehow ignorant of this basic condition, they still would undoubtedly feel its effects as they too moved unknowingly with their fellow sufferers up the stairs onto the public transit route. Jacob is disturbed by this recognition to the point that he develops a “violent reversion towards male society, cloistered rooms, and the work of the classics”, a desperate and futile rejection of the modes of delivery for the major language that he now understands as constitutive of him and all others (110).

Later in the novel this sensation is described as “Plato’s argument stowed” in the minds of Jacob and the populace, a residual superstructure that organizes daily life. The dominant language here is explained as a consciousness, a collective feeling of an ideological model that arranges bodies in relation to forms. In a physical manifestation of return to this organization, Jacob makes a pilgrimage to Greece, where he can align with what is most immediately sensible by the dominant language. He “seldom thought of Plato or Socrates in the flesh; on the other hand his feelings for architecture were very strong”, and he becomes concerned with questions of what makes up a functional ‘civilization’, certainly a modern endeavor.³² Though the Greece he imagines visiting now lies in the ruins he tours, he still

³¹ Hollander, Rachel. “Novel Ethics: Alterity and Form In Jacob’s Room.” *Twentieth-Century Literature*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2007, pp. 41-43. *Jacob’s Room* is explained by Hollander as demonstrative of a modernist ethics in which the other is prior to existence of ‘self’, this particular text “a self-conscious intervention in the history of the English novel.”

³² Hall summarizes the stereotyping that results from these sign systems, posing questions asked from the colonizing perspective, “Where did the Indians stand in the order of the

experiences *feelings* that are decidedly golden age Greek, philosophical and social sensibilities that motivate the current dominant British language (207). An “ethical regime of images is at work, arranging images in relation to origin in organization of the *ethos* of the community.”³³ Jacob projects such moralisms onto pragmatically rendered features of Greek sculptures, postulating that the Greeks were people of ‘artistic sense’, as they leave the backs of their statues unfinished, the portion out of sight remaining rough (206). Immersion in these powerful feelings leads him to essentialize the notions of imperialism that ultimately will take his life on the battlefield- sitting upon the Acropolis he wonders, “Why not rule countries in the way they should be ruled?” (208). Here we might wonder why Woolf’s writing seems to be reproducing the arrangement of the senses by dominant ideology? Lane explains in reference to Deleuzian theory, “Deleuze contends that the task of reversing Platonism requires an understanding of Plato’s ‘motivations’. For Deleuze, these motivations can be detected in Plato’s desire to banish the false pretenders to the Idea - those “bad” copies that threaten to undermine the “good” kind of imitation that underpins the hierarchical structure of Plato’s thought.”³⁴ By making both the reader and in some instances

Creation? Where were their nations placed in the order of civilized societies? Were they ‘true men’? Were they made in God’s image?”

³³ Ranciere explains that such regimes are simply signs based on supposed truth which educates a population on the “distribution of occupations with the community” (90). Note that he does not view these as examples of ‘art’, as they have no ability or potential to redistribute sense, rather only work to separate artistic simulacra from art.

³⁴ Lane, David. “Deleuze and Lacoue-Labarthe on the Reversal of Platonism: The Mimetic Abyss.” *SubStance*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2011, pp. 106–108. Lane highlights that Deleuze understands in Nietzsche’s writing the mimetic power of simulacrum (“false copies”) in subverting Plato’s structures of truth, knowledge, and resemblance. This contrasts with Heidegger’s evaluation of Nietzsche as entrapped by the Platonic models he aimed to break free from, in that reversal is the chosen strategy for overthrowing Plato’s system in this case.

the characters of the novel themselves aware of such structures, the first step is achieved in making Plato's essentialist modality appear less necessary.

Thus, the example above makes more readily legible the logic that both we and Jacob are entrenched in. Minor literature's first pedagogical task, then, is to demonstrate the motivations of these restrictive models (what is ultimately being subverted must be identified carefully). Dogmatic patterns of thought such as Jacob's are perpetuated because of unawareness that we are coordinated by particular assemblages or distributions that we assume to be singular. Ranciere explains, the limits of voice and vision in these structures of unawareness "is not a question of making the inhuman unreal. It is a question of making a form of inhumanity incomparable to any other by giving it both an ontological status and a sensible texture that makes it entirely apart. It is always the same strategy of the asymmetric relation. It is not a gesture of defense; it is a gesture of appropriation. It dismisses the availability of the visual experience that can be shared in favor of the voice that commands and forbids."³⁵ Thus, we assume singularity in our alignments as Jacob does, making it possible for us to mistake inhuman affect for human essence, producing the very notion of human.

Disturbing this image of timeless correctness, though, *Jacob's Room* presents Athens as an image at once "suburban" and "immortal". Despite the incessant presence of the columns looming over the now-only-partially-ancient city, the long-reaching shadows they cast touch upon countless reminders of modern society, spanning across newly built electric

³⁵ In his interview, he describes these Platonically influenced ways of conceiving of civilization, colonization, Empire, as convincing those who invest in them that they are decidedly unique somehow, "supersensible events that could no longer be compared with any other case of slaughter and genocide."

rails, citizens wearing bowler hats (in an ironic reversal of the English imitating the Greeks), and visitors from countries that had not yet been established when last the Parthenon's builders drew breath. These many reminders of the antiquity of the "Greek feelings" brought about by modern interruptions that Jacob experiences are always accompanied by a knowledge that the grand structure he sits reading in has maintained its grasp on dominant ideology despite its age (and assumed distance from the modern time). The effect of this juxtaposition is explained by noticing the appearance of the building itself- the intense midday glare off of it leaves the "frieze almost invisible" (206). In this composure, the particular details of the Parthenon are indiscernible because of its own reflective properties, scrambling the visual and conceptual senses. Because Woolf's writing is able to describe both the distance and immediacy of the Parthenon, the image of this Platonic distribution of the sensible is robbed of its stability. Here an object that can both be seen (or sensed) and not be seen is constantly in a state of flux, the textures of the structure always appearing and reappearing elsewhere within the frame, each time differently than the last. Each potential focal point of the image always becomes another in this way until the senses are only able to feel that they are in fact being affected; and so bodies have to go to such great lengths as recalling Plato as a communal source of how the sensible is distributed in attempts to examine why and how.

Contemplating the fleeting nature of these focal points, Jacob concludes these brief moments of intensity are what make up "beauty".

Then, at a top-floor window, leaning out, looking down, you see beauty itself; or in the corner of an omnibus; or squatted in a ditch- beauty glowing, suddenly expressive, withdrawn the moment after. No one can count on it or seize it or have it wrapped in paper... Thus if you talk of a beautiful woman you mean only something flying fast which for a second uses the eyes, lips, or cheeks of Fanny Elmer, for example, to glow through. (158)

Since Baumgarten's separation of the aesthetic from sense, its historical Latin/Greek meaning, in the seventeen-hundreds, artistic 'quality' has been evaluated in terms of "beauty".³⁶ This supposed critique of "taste" made by the philosopher perpetuates Platonistic assumptions, the theories depending upon noticing inherent "truth" and "perfection" in the world that somehow are in alignment with transcendent forms. Jacob (as in *Jacob's Room*, not Jacob Baumgarten), similarly is convinced that "beauty itself", some super-worldly essence, is "expressed" by his worldly surroundings in fleeting instances. Beauty is the indulgence in the expected. Unsurprisingly, Jacob is titillated by the notion that women, historically stereotyped as representations of 'natural beauty', focusing on physical features which are collectively agreed upon romantic focuses, the "eyes, lips, and cheeks". These are unsurprisingly also the features most considered in classical sculpture. Such cultural practices of noticing particular features in the world and matching them up through allegory with corresponding qualities (beauty, purity, truth, justice, good, evil, etc.) is a prime example of the ordering of the senses, as attention is drawn to these and isolated from noticing other aspects of the environment. King's College Chapel is a collectively agreed upon point of focus that the novel addresses, for example, wondering, "Is it fanciful to suppose the sky, washed into the crevices of King's College Chapel, lighter, thinner, more sparkling than sky elsewhere? Does Cambridge burn not only into the night, but into the day?" (38). Almost holy qualities are imbued into not just the building, but the very air around it, of course resulting from the communal consciousness that bears the great weight of such revered, widely recognizable institutions. Woolf's writing certainly pushes back against this unmistakably British yearning for customs of prestige and rehearsed mixing of

³⁶ Baumgarten, A. G. *Aesthetica*. Hildesheim, G. Olms. 1961.

the ideal and political. Such drive to abandon conscious recognition of how the senses are arranged altogether and instead pursue “taste” is addressed in the novel, comparing the order of public focus to that of insects around lanterns, “If you stand a lantern under a tree, very insect in the forest creeps up to it- a curious assembly, since though they scramble and swing and swing and knock their heads against the glass, they seem to have no purpose- senselessness inspires them” (39).

Ranciere’s vocabulary of the *ethical regime of images* explains that examples such as King’s College are “imitations differentiated by their origin... and the effects they result in... images providing citizens with a certain education” to conscribe “the distribution of the city’s occupants”.³⁷ Here education is meant insofar as ‘training’ or ‘conditioning’; this is decidedly different from the sort of pedagogy I argue is evident in Woolf’s text- allowing for overcoming of non-reading that limits our ability to read our own distribution. Considering the ethical regime, we might read the prestige of Cambridge as dependent upon its origins as one of the “original” places of high learning in Britain, competing with Oxford, whose end is to facilitate and manufacture knowledge as a product. In addition to the ethical regime, Ranciere introduces the *representative regime of the arts*, which “identifies the substance of art... forms of normativity that define the conditions according to which imitations can be recognized as good or bad, adequate or inadequate: partitions between the representable and unrepresentable”, comprising the “distribution of resemblances”. This regime is thus linked closely to Baumgarten’s use of aesthetics that calls for evaluation of successfulness and beauty of art in its formal qualities, practices of artistic taste. Prior examples of Jacob’s evaluations of “beauty” would fall clearly into this specific regime. The third and final regime

³⁷ Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. La Fabrique-Editions, 2000. pp. 16-17.

of art described is that of *regime poetic*, that which delineates the proper ways of making art, consisting of rhetoric that ultimately enables a conception of the artist as professional. This notion is likely responsible for Jacob's travels around Europe being conceived as essential in the development of a young artist/academic. These three regimes of art Ranciere theorizes operate as analogy, "with a fully hierarchical vision of the community".

The relationship between literature and historicity, then, is responsible for real effects (but we already know this). Ranciere points out that beyond just producing material arrangements of speech and action, as other critics often remind us, they also produce "regimes of sensible intensity".

"They draft maps of the visible, trajectories between the visible and the sayable, relationships between modes of being, modes of saying, and modes of doing and making. They define variations of sensible intensities, perceptions, and the abilities of bodies."³⁸

As such, collective bodies are not produced by this relationship between literature and historicity, but "introduce lines of fracture and disincorporation into imaginary collective bodies".

In *Jacob's Room* this is emphasized repeatedly, the characters realizing their dissociation from those around them and from themselves, lacking the words to voice their feelings of disconnection. Let us return once more to Cambridge, for what institution other than that of academia could be a more appropriate or familiar imaginary collective body to such a group as this ours? The 'men of Cambridge', the 'scholars of Britain', gathered in a reading room studying together, reading Keats and histories of the Holy Roman Empire "as one must" (55). This imaginary collective body is one that fancies itself coherent and concise.

³⁸ Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. La Fabrique-Editions, 2000. pp. 35.

After the group bursts out in laughter following an unidentified argument, “only gestures of arms, movements of bodies, could be seen shaping something in the room” (56). The text (we cannot assume the questions are posed by Jacob) wonders whether the interaction consists of an argument, betting, another action entirely? Immediately following the collective laughter, the communal rejoicing in shared purpose and belonging, we wonder along with the novel, “What was shaped by the arms and bodies moving in the twilight room?”

Seemingly troubled by this inevitably shared doubt about these separate bodies’ capacity to exist wholly, as a cohesive composition, Jacob moves away from the group to gaze longingly out the window onto the hollowed groups of campus. Not having the words to sort out that his vision and voice is fractured and dispersed throughout patterns that keep him unaware of this, he stands at the window “to receive his gift from the past”, retreating back into the imagined collective of Cambridge tradition. Smoking his pipe while admiring the imposing Gothic architecture, Jacob hurriedly flees from thoughts of dissociation. He basks in tobacco smoke, satisfied, “the sound of the clock purred to him... conveying a sense of old buildings and time; and himself the inheritor; and then to-morrow; and friends” (57-58). This reverie cannot last though, and immediately upon Jacob turning back to the reading room, “the shape they had made, the spiritual shape, hard yet ephemeral, was dashed to splinters”. As the students disperse from the common area, this dream of a collective body is obliterated.

The young man is quick to try to recapture his sense of place. Even though he can hardly distinguish which of his classmates is left in the room with him, and doesn’t seem much to care anyhow, Jacob invests desperately in a feeling of “intimacy” as he and Simeon

discuss Julian the Apostate (a Roman emperor). The contents of the discussion are minimal at best, tapped over by the knocking of a tobacco pipe on the mantelpiece, “the words were inaudible”; the absence of notable conversation makes the image ever easier to indulge in—two scholars wrapping their snuff out on a near ancient fireplace among well-worn armchairs, “Without need of movement or speech it rose softly and washed over everything, mollifying, kindling, and coating the mind with the lustre of pearl... a light... of Cambridge burning.” (59) Jacob brims with ecstasy once more, prompted to re-immense in the scholarly fantasy simply by the mention of Julian Apostate and Simeon’s voice grasping at significance from his chair, “Somehow it seems to matter”. In a constant state of flux, Jacob moves between existential agitation and prophetic exaltation as he moves between the fluid boundaries of what is sensible, anguishing at the feeling of disconnectedness and then just as soon grasping at comforts of belonging again.

Combining Ranciere and Deleuze can be useful for critical studies in that a post-Nietzschean model for reading other than genealogy can be explored further. By explaining how a minor literature operates within a major language, we are able to discuss the ways in which sense is distributed. The ability to move apart from the restrictions of historicist concerns is much welcomed in that style is foregrounded, providing chances to engage aspects of texts that are not limited to ‘power and discourse’. Surely cultural and gender studies will both appreciate this in that inquiry of how texts and authors are not only marginalized, but also *marginal* yields examples of how marginalized voices might be able to be heard by disrupting the major language that they write in.

Study of *Jacob’s Room* as a minor literature would situate the text at the forefront of Woolf’s canon, ironically so too, as it is eligible for this status because it interrupts the very

language of canon, “a self-conscious intervention in the history of the English novel”.³⁹

Hollander’s observation of the novel as an “intervention” in this particular language is especially astute in that explains the text as one that not only redefines Woolf’s own writing as modernist in quality, but also as a force of change in the field of literature as well as art in general. Academic and artistic engagement with the “political, artistic, and social events of their time” allowed members of the Bloomsbury group to develop post-Victorian perspectives in England. These perspectives not only allow for a shift in writing, but also a conscious critique of the British imperialist notions that were unchallenged by literature until this point. Thus, *Jacob’s Room* stands as a move towards the experimental for Woolf, a significant problematizing of form making way for texts such as *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Waves*, and *Between the Acts*.⁴⁰

These examples of the prioritization of style (rather than narrative) all are important pieces of Woolf’s collected works in that they provide unique environments in which to study modern English deterritorializations of language. Dewsbury explains,

³⁹Hollander, Rachel. “Novel Ethics: Alterity and Form In *Jacob’s Room*.” *Twentieth-Century Literature*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2007, pp. 42., doi:10.1215/0041462x-2007-2001. Hollander specifically aims to demonstrate that “an understanding of ethics as responsibility for the other- a responsibility that calls the self into being” establishes *Jacob’s Room* as an “intervention in the English novel.” Though her studies are most pertinent in regards to ethics, she observes, “Only relatively recently have readers and critics been able to appreciate the aesthetic and philosophical significance of this novel.” She argues this appreciation is made possible “by poststructuralist rethinkings of the categories of subjectivity, language, and ethics.” Certainly, these topics differ from appreciations of Woolf for her writing’s *redistributive* inertia, but each approach acknowledges similar qualities in the text.

⁴⁰ Nalbantian, Suzanne. *Aesthetic Autobiography: from Life to Art in Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Anais Nin*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994. These texts most are significant because of their prioritization of style; this sensibility of Woolf’s is recognizable in her appreciation for Proust’s elegance to Joyce’s garishness. Surely, Woolf and Proust both

“Assemblage thinking transforms the epistemological implications of networks to work across, not quite against, the discourse of globalization and capitalism in which the various tendencies of politics, global viruses, war, surveillance, and social movements are considered synonymous with forms of networked organization.”⁴¹ In other words, assemblages can function as “bridgework between” philosophy, science, and social theory, since reading of “connections and becomings whose functioning logics are more about folds than structures, more complex than linear, more recursive than dialectical, more emergent than totalizing” can inform the procedures and foundational knowledge of each of these fields, conjecturally serving as effective common vocabulary for inter-disciplinary exchange.⁴² In this way, transformations can be recognized not only within content areas, but in relation to an interconnected web of academic institutions and inquiry projects related to *affect*. The *Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group* explains that the group itself was intent on promoting interdisciplinary discussion by gathering “painters, writers, economists, politicians, and critics”, as they recognized each could learn from the other by discussing varieties of approaches to similar occurrences in the world (9). These exchanges ultimately were instrumental in the Group’s development of post-Victorian thought because the diverse aspects of Victorian quality identifiable in Britain could only be identified and examined by a similarly diversified body of scholars and artists.⁴³

⁴¹ Dewsbury, J-D. “The Deleuze-Guattarian Assemblage: Plastic Habits.” *Area*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2011, pp. 149., doi:10.1111/j.1475-4762.2011.01006.x.

⁴² Dewsbury refers to Shaviro’s observation that “we stand on the threshold of radically new technologies for manipulating life at the biochemical level” to explain the exigence for approaches that engage and connect philosophy, science, and social theory (147).

⁴³ Nalbantian, Suzanne. *Aesthetic Autobiography: from Life to Art in Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Anais Nin*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994. By “constructing major ‘true’ events form the minor occurrences in her *own* personal life”, “Woolf transforms lived data into fictionalized discourse” (43)

Reading *Jacob's Room* as assemblages like Dewsbury describes, as "first a mixture of matters (literal and metaphorical) of expression, acts of discernment, and molecular combinations; and second, simultaneously they enact both a line of flight and a line of articulation" allows readers to notice stutterings within a major (historically Greco-Roman-Victorian) language that disturb its preconceptions and structure (151). Expressions of distributions of the sensible are written in Woolf's novel as unfixed in that they will undoubtedly manifest elsewhere and with different texture constantly. Not only does this make possible interpretations of *Jacob's Room* as an experimental catalyst within Woolf's writing that extends into and influences her following works, but also as perhaps one of the only preserved examples of poststructural British literature (especially in the Bloomsbury tradition beyond 'modern or postmodern').⁴⁴ Operating as minor literature, Woolf's writing is significant in its interdisciplinary pedagogical power, helping readers, writers, artists, and the field of Critical Studies to better understand and articulate the assemblages that structure our senses, staging "a wide range of approaches to questions of self and other, communication and alienation, intimacy and distance." Hollander helps to explain the significance of this novel in particular for Woolf's future work and for readers-

Jacob's Room cannot "teach ethics" through example or by engendering sympathy. Instead, by insisting on the impossibility of easy sympathy, by confronting the reader with the limits of knowledge and representation, the novel lays the groundwork for a different kind of receptivity: not an understanding of the other built on knowledge and talk, a gradual process of bringing self and other closer together, but rather the unpredictable and almost indescribable moment of intimacy, of an unprecedented and unrepeatable event, of "Julian the Apostate."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Rosner notes that while Forster also was instrumental in bringing about change in modernist literature, Woolf's willingness to experiment with form coupled with her clear communication of agenda and *architecture* set her apart as unique amongst her contemporaries.

⁴⁵ Hollander, Rachel. "Novel Ethics: Alterity and Form In *Jacob's Room*." *Twentieth-Century Literature*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2007, pp. 42-61.

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