Looking Without Knowing: Rancière, Aristotle, and Spectating in the Representative Regime

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Abstract

This thesis expands Jacques Rancière’s critique of theories of political spectatorship through an examination of Aristotle’s description of poetry in the Poetics, and musical education in Politics 8. In The Emancipated Spectator, Rancière argues that theories of spectatorship encode a ‘paradox of the spectator’ by implying that spectators are both passive and ignorant in relation to the artwork. Rancière locates the origins of this paradox in Plato’s attacks on art in the Republic, arguing that it persists in contemporary theories that seek to ‘redeem’ spectators from the ills of spectating. In his analysis, Rancière appears to allude to an Aristotelian influence on the paradox, but does not explore it in detail. This thesis undertakes an in-depth analysis of Aristotelian spectatorship in light of Rancière’s political and aesthetic framework to demonstrate Aristotle’s contribution to the spectator paradox.

I argue that Aristotle ‘redeems’ spectatorship from ignorance and passivity by distinguishing art from spectacle, and idealised spectatorship from viewership. Rancière’s conceptualisation of the ‘representative regime of art’ describes a paradigm of art-practices predicated on hierarchies of genre found in the Poetics. I argue that careful reading of the Poetics via the representative regime reveals aspects overlooked by Rancière that are of significance for his critique of spectatorship. Aristotle’s subordination of material performance produces an ‘anti-optical’ relationship that grounds art in the intelligence and ‘good activity’ of poetic composition. The effect is to establish a pedagogical
relationship whereby good art is recognized by ideal spectators, to the exclusion of ‘vulgar’ audiences.

The political effects of Aristotelian spectatorship are evident in his division of audiences in Chapter 8 of the Politics. An examination of the Athenian theatre, and of Plato’s and Aristotle’s discussions of democratic spectatorship reveals an opposition between elite critical judgement (*krisis*) and the noise of mass audiences (*thorubos*). I argue that this opposition forms an instance of what Rancière terms the ‘distribution of the sensible’ by differentiating educated spectatorship from ignorant viewership. In *Politics* 8 this distribution is founded upon wider partitions of time, activity, and labour in the state. I suggest that Aristotle ‘redeems’ spectatorship by producing political distinctions between the idealised ‘good spectatorship’ of the educated and the ‘bad viewership’ of the ignorant. In doing so, Aristotle re-encodes the passivity and ignorance of viewing.

My examination of Aristotelian spectatorship establishes the case for the conceptual expansion of Rancière’s representative regime, and critique of spectatorship, and suggests the importance of Rancière’s critique of spectatorship for his wider political and aesthetic thought.
Thesis declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and, where applicable, partner institutions responsible for the joint award of this degree.
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List of Abbreviations And Notes on the Text

1. Abbreviations
The following will be cited according to their full titles in their first occurrence, after which the following abbreviations will be used:

   ES – The Emancipated Spectator, Jacques Rancière.
   Da – Disagreement, Jacques Rancière.
   Ds – Dissensus, Jacques Rancière.
   MS – Mute Speech, Jacques Rancière.
   IS – The Ignorant Schoolmaster, Jacques Rancière.
   FI – The Future of the Image, Jacques Rancière

2. Editions:
References to Aristotle's Poetics are from Gerald Else’s translation (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), unless otherwise specified. Quotations are cited by page numbers in Else’s translation, with inclusion of the Bekker system of citation: e.g. (Poetics 16; 1447b). In paraphrasing sections or referencing sections, I use only the Bekker system citation.

References to Aristotle's Politics are from the translation by T.A. Sinclair and Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin, 1992). References are cited by page numbers to Sinclair and Saunders’ translation, with the inclusion of Book and Chapter divisions: e.g. (Politics 463; 8.5).
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Thanks also to colleagues in the English department, in particular Kelli Rowe and Chelsea Avard, who have been indispensible in support through coffee, kind words, timely advice, and humour. Thanks of a different kind to close friends Andrew Kitching and Lewis Wundenberg for knowing when to use any means necessary to prise me from the keyboard and lure me out of the office.

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Introduction

The Trouble with Spectating: Rancière’s Critique of Spectatorship

In this thesis, I expand on an important area of Rancière’s critique of theories of political spectatorship by examining Aristotle’s description of poetry in the Poetics, and musical education in Politics 8. I do so by engaging Rancière’s political and aesthetic framework, in particular his conceptualisation of the ‘regimes of art’ (Politics of Aesthetics 21-23), his distinction between ‘politics’ and ‘police’ (Disagreement 28-30), and his notion of the ‘distribution of the sensible’ (Politics of Aesthetics 12-13).\(^1\) Rancière identifies a series of paradigmatic principles in the Poetics by which human activities are deemed ‘artistic’, which he terms the ‘representative regime of art’ (PA 21).\(^2\) One of Rancière’s central contentions is that Aristotle’s hierarchical stipulations concerning genre propriety function to limit – or ‘police’ – the political nature of art. My examination of the Poetics and Politics 8 shows how such policing functions within the implied relationship between audience and artwork. By distinguishing between the ideal spectating of the educated few and the vulgar viewing of the masses, Aristotle encodes fundamental hierarchies of intelligence that produce political divisions. In examining the Poetics and Politics 8, this thesis demonstrates the viability of extending Rancière’s critique of spectatorship, and

\(^1\) My use of these terms throughout this thesis refers to these cited works, unless otherwise specified. The first in-text citation of a major work by Rancière will include the full title, after which abbreviations will be used, as outlined on page iv.

\(^2\) The representative (sometimes also called the ‘poetic’) regime of art is first outlined in Mute Speech 43-50, in which Rancière terms it the ‘poetics of representation’ or ‘system of representation’.
identifies key ways in which a return to Aristotle can further develop Rancière's under-explored concept of the representative regime.

Rancière's critique of spectatorship is outlined in *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009), in which he sets out to ‘reconstruct the network of presuppositions that place the question of the spectator at the heart of the discussion of the relations between art and politics’ (2). This leads Rancière to the identification of the ‘paradox of the spectator’, in which ‘there is no theatre without a spectator’ and yet ‘[t]o be a spectator is to be separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act’ (ES 2). Rancière locates the origins of the paradox in Plato's attacks on art and theatre found in *The Republic*; for Plato, artistic mediation alienates spectators and disrupts the harmonious, self-present order of the ideal community by reinforcing spectators’ ignorance and passivity. Yet as Rancière argues, attempts to absolve spectatorship from the paradox ‘have invariably retained the premises while changing the conclusion’ (ES 3). By aiming to educate or activate spectators, contemporary theories of spectatorship enact a ‘dramaturgy of sin and redemption’, reinforcing the presumption that spectating is inherently bad (ES 7). In his argumentation, Rancière appears to allude to – without explicit detail – elements of his own discussion of the Aristotelian ‘representative regime’ of art. My examination of Aristotle is motivated by that allusion, and seeks to further flesh-out the conceptual implications of Rancière's analysis. As I intend to show, reading Aristotle’s *Poetics* and *Politics* in light of the spectator paradox reveals that Aristotle ‘redeems’ spectatorship from the Platonic accusation of ignorance and passivity. These findings are significant for Rancière's own conceptual framework,

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3 *The Emancipated Spectator* was originally published in French in 2008.
suggesting ways in which the representative regime may be expanded and his critique of spectatorship broadened.

Rancière’s writing on politics and aesthetics has had a considerable impact on contemporary art and art criticism. The first (eponymous) chapter of *The Emancipated Spectator* originated in a lecture given to the Fifth International Summer Academy of Arts, Frankfurt in 2004. In 2007, the lecture appeared in essay form in the journal *Artforum International* in an issue dedicated to Rancière’s work. In this issue, Kristin Ross states that ‘Rancière’s thinking grants to art a kind of revitalized energy and potential for the new; art is given much the same power Rancière has granted elsewhere to politics: that of reframing, and thus expanding, what can be perceived in the present’ (255). Liam Gillick asserts that Rancière’s ‘elaboration of the idea that political art is not a negotiation between politics and art but “between two politics of aesthetics”’ makes him compulsory reading’ (265). The contemporary collaborative artist Thomas Hirschhorn writes of the influence of Rancière’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, which he read ‘as a manifesto’, stating that ‘Jacques Rancière gives me the strength to keep my eternal flame burning for art’ (268; orig. emphasis).

Elsewhere, Nikos Papastergiadis states that Rancière’s importance for contemporary art is evident in the fact that ‘his texts are not just read as theoretical commentaries, but that they serve as a kind of conceptual toolbox and critical touchstone for many curators, critics and artists’ (‘Breathing Space’ 6). As a result, ‘[t]he scope of his impact is now as global and manifold as the globalizing reach of the biennales, fora, magazines and situations that manifest contemporary art’ (6). Investigation of Rancière’s critical engagement with spectatorship is clearly of significance for debates in contemporary art. As we
shall see, a thorough exploration of Aristotle’s audience divisions further clarifies Rancière’s critique of the pedagogical hierarchies implicit in theories that seek to ‘teach’ spectators through critical engagement.

Rancière and Aristotle: Frameworks and Thesis Contribution

A preliminary overview of Rancière’s aesthetic and political framework establishes the significance of this thesis for Rancière’s wider thought. Rancière’s conceptualisation of the ‘ethical’, ‘representative’, and ‘aesthetic’ regimes of art forms a key aspect of his engagement with political aesthetics. Each regime ‘is a network of relationships which informs the way an object, act, process or practice is understood as art’ (Davis Jacques Rancière, 134). The ethical regime is located in Plato’s attacks on art, and is typified by the reduction of art to ‘images’ that are judged by their ethical effect on the being – or ethos – of a community (Rancière PA, 21). The representative regime takes Aristotle’s Poetics as its paradigmatic example. Within the representative regime an object is considered ‘artistic’ inasmuch as it adheres to the rules of a particular genre (Rancière Mute Speech, 45). While the regime is rooted in Aristotle’s Poetics, Rancière argues that it is most clearly expressed in the formulaic use of Aristotle’s treatise by neoclassicist writers such as Corneille and Racine. Finally, the aesthetic regime functions as an alternative account of artistic modernity. Rancière locates its origins in Schiller’s reading of Kant, the innovations of Romanticism, and the emergence of the novel through writers such as Flaubert. The aesthetic regime breaks with the hierarchical rules of the representative regime, meaning that ‘any object can potentially be an artwork and any activity can potentially give
rise to artworks’ (Davis Jacques Rancière, 136; orig. emphasis). For Rancière, the political nature of art emerges through the aesthetic regime’s disruption of aesthetic boundaries.

Yet Rancière employs a specific definition of politics at odds with regular usage. For Rancière, politics is not located in the forms of government or processes typically taken to be ‘political’; these institutions Rancière instead terms ‘the police’. Policing, for Rancière, ‘destines specific individuals and groups to occupy positions of rule or being ruled . . . pinning them down to a certain time and space, to specific “bodies”, that is to specific ways of being, seeing and saying’ (Dissensus 139). ‘The police’ – otherwise termed ‘police-order’ – determines the manner in which subjects are kept to their ‘proper’ places, activities, and capacities. As I discuss in Chapter 1, Rancière argues that the political philosophies of Plato and Aristotle function as particular instances of policing, which he terms ‘archipolitics’ and ‘parapolitics’ respectively (Disagreement 65, 70). The ‘archipolitical’ and ‘parapolitical’ frameworks of Plato and Aristotle operate alongside the ‘ethical’ and ‘representative’ regimes of art.

‘Politics’, in Rancière’s narrow definition, antagonises ‘police-orders’ by disrupting the roles and capacities assigned to bodies, and thus ‘makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise’ (Da 29-30). Art is ‘political’ inasmuch as it produces such disruption. While ‘police orders’ produce forms of ‘consensus’, art produces ‘dissensus’, or ‘a conflict between sense and sense. . . . between a sensory presentation and a way of making sense of it’ (Ds 139; orig. emphasis). The political nature of art – as realized in the aesthetic regime – is its capacity for dissensus. The representative regime of art, rooted in Aristotle’s genre
prescriptions, ‘polices’ art by limiting dissensus. Given that Rancière describes
the emergence of the aesthetic regime as a ‘strict and term-for-term reversal’
(MS 50) of the representative regime, it is clear that in-depth analysis of the
latter helps to further elucidate Rancière’s conception of both aesthetic
dissensus and the politics of art. I suggest that an important element of the
representative regime’s ‘policing’ is its restriction of art to appropriate
audiences.

Examination of Rancière’s engagement with spectatorship is also important
given the centrality of the theatrical for his underlying notion of equality. As
Peter Hallward asserts, ‘[o]f the several situations in which Rancière has
defended his anarchic conception of equality, perhaps none is more fundamental
and illuminating than that of theater – theater in both the literal and
metaphorical sense of the term’ (141). Hallward identifies what he calls the
‘theatrocratic’ nature of Rancière’s thinking of equality, evident in his privileging
of the spectacular, the artificial, the multiple, the disruptive, and the
improvisatory (146-50). The theatrical metaphor is largely the result of
Rancière’s interlocking of politics and aesthetics, as conceptualised by what he
terms the ‘distribution of the sensible’. The distribution of the sensible refers to
the operation of politics on an aesthetic level. Rancière describes it as

the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to

sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the
visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously
determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of
experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be
said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time.

(PA 13)

Rancière’s redefinition of politics locates it in the manner of the appearance of subjects and their visibility within given communities. This means that for Rancière ‘politics is not a reflection on the sources of, or justifications for, the exercise of power. It is an intervention at the level of what is visible and audible’ (Tanke 12). As Gabriel Rockhill notes, Rancière’s engagement with the ‘long-standing problem’ of the connection between art and politics ‘attacks the guiding assumption upon which this problem is based: that art and politics are separate domains in need of being linked together’ (196). The theatrical metaphor results from Rancière’s analysis of the aesthetic constitution of politics; politics ‘is always about creating a stage . . . politics always takes the form, more or less, of the establishment of a theater’ (‘Entretien avec Jacques Rancière’; qtd. in Hallward 142). By expanding Rancière’s critique of spectatorship, this thesis highlights the importance of ideas of spectatorship for Rancière’s wider thought; if politics is the establishment of a ‘theater’, then the possibilities of such politics are also determined by ways of seeing.

A further significant contribution this thesis makes to Rancièrian scholarship is to clarify the importance of Aristotle for Rancière’s thought. Rancière’s reading of Greek philosophy takes Plato to be the original culprit in both the displacement of politics and the erasure of art. Yet as Hallward notes, ‘rather than Plato, it is really Aristotle who is Rancière’s most significant
adversary. In both politics and aesthetics, Aristotle is the person who devises a way of containing and disarming the threats first identified by Plato’ (153). As this thesis shows, the same may be said of spectatorship. In Chapter 1, I outline the Platonic ethical regime, and highlight Plato’s attacks on spectatorship. According to Rancière, Plato attacks the theatre because it is a source of disruption to the ordered harmony of the ideal state. In Chapter 2, I outline how Aristotle’s Poetics provides art with its own ‘space’, while limiting its capacity for dissensus. I argue that the representative regime also functions to contain the ‘political’ potential of spectating; Aristotle redeems the theatre from Plato’s attacks by restricting the experience of art to ideal audiences. In Chapter 3, I argue that, for Aristotle, ‘ideal audiences’ are educated citizens, to the exclusion of workers and other non-citizens.

Rancière’s argumentative strategies are complex and require careful unpacking. As Lavender observes,

Rancière often writes glancingly and allusively . . . His work circulates around certain key terms and understandings, albeit that the precise configuration of these shifts across various writings. Characteristically, terms are shaded with nuance, complication and sometimes counter-intuitive readings, and often entail a sort of negative definition.

(308)

An immediate example is Rancière’s redefinition of ‘politics’ and ‘police’ to designate concepts radically different from their everyday use. Further examples
are specific to Rancière’s discussion of art and spectatorship, including terms such as the ‘flatness’ or ‘depth’ of images (PA 15-16), ‘choreographic community’ (ES 5), ‘optical machinery’ (ES 3), and the ‘anybody whoever’ (Ds 60). Accordingly, Rancière’s wider political and aesthetic framework requires careful explication in order to arrive at an adequate understanding of his critique of spectatorship – the task of my first chapter. As I intend to demonstrate, some of these terms provide the means by which to expand Rancière’s notion of the representative regime in order to address the key problematic of the spectator paradox. Terms of my own coinage, such as the ‘anti-optical’ procedure of the Poetics, the foregrounding of the ‘good intelligence’ of poetic composition, and the opposition between critical and mass spectatorship (or ‘krisis’ and ‘thorubos’) can productively be added to Rancière’s discussion of spectatorship and the representative regime in order to illuminate the intellectual inequalities inherent in ideas of political spectatorship.

**Chapter Overview**

In Chapter 1, I situate Rancière’s critique of spectatorship in *The Emancipated Spectator* in relation to his wider critical framework to establish the need for a re-examination of Aristotelian spectatorship. I begin by undertaking a detailed discussion of Rancière’s notion of intellectual equality, his redefinition of politics, and critique of political philosophy. For Rancière, political philosophy, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, is the site where ‘philosophy tries to rid itself of politics, to suppress a scandal in thinking proper to the exercise of politics’ (Da xii). In my

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4 My use of these terms throughout will refer to the cited works, unless otherwise specified.
discussion of the ‘distribution of the sensible’, I outline Rancière’s analysis of Plato’s and Aristotle’s displacement of politics via ‘archipolitics’ and ‘parapolitics’ respectively. Rancière’s description of Aristotle’s division of speech and noise serves as the basis for my conceptual distinction between spectating and viewing in Chapter 3. In the second section of Chapter 1, I discuss the Platonic ‘ethical regime of images’, which is a vital foundation for The Emancipated Spectator and provides a conceptual counterpoint to the Aristotelian representative regime. According to Rancière, the ‘flatness’ of images for Plato allows them to address any audience and frees images from direct pedagogical transmission. I argue in Chapters 2 and 3 that Aristotle’s splitting of spectating from viewing functions to restore the possibility of pedagogical transmission appropriate to spectators, and resolve the threat of ‘wrong’ audiences identified by Plato. In opposition to the mediation of images, the ethical regime takes as its ideal the ‘choreographic community’, which substitutes spectating for direct bodily participation in music (PA 14). Rancière bases the ‘choreographic community’ on his reading of Plato’s description of musical education in The Laws, which forms an important conceptual foundation for his formulation of the spectator paradox.

In the last section of Chapter 1, I discuss in detail Rancière’s critique of spectatorship in The Emancipated Spectator. My aim here is to elucidate Rancière’s problematizing of political theories of spectatorship, and to indicate avenues for further exploration. Rancière, drawing on his discussion of the ethical regime, argues that the spectator paradox consists in the assumption that spectators are rendered passive and ignorant by the ‘optical machinery’ of theatrical mediation (ES 3). The underlying presumptions of the paradox persist
in the work of avant-garde theorists such as Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud. According to Rancière, such theorists engage a ‘dramaturgy of sin and redemption’ by attempting to redeem spectators from their passivity and ignorance (ES7). In his argumentation, Rancière appears to refer to elements of the Poetics and his own formulation of the representative regime without detailed explication. The allusion is the central motivation for my investigation of Aristotelian spectatorship in Chapters 2 and 3, which aims to fill this gap. My examination of a range of additional avant-garde theorists of theatre such as Franco Marinetti, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Augusto Boal identifies a range of thematic concerns that suggest the potential for further consideration of Rancière’s critique of spectatorship.

In Chapter 2, I examine the Poetics in light of Rancière’s representative regime of art in order to identify the implications of the regime for spectatorship. Rancière bases the representative regime on four principles – fiction, genre, decorum, and presence – by which objects are deemed ‘artistic’. The regime is primarily notable for its hierarchical genre stipulations, in which ‘[t]he genre of a poem – epic or satire, tragedy or comedy – is above all related to the nature of what it represents’ (MS 45). In addition, Rancière outlines the manner in which the regime subordinates the ‘visible’ to the ‘sayable’ (Future of the Image 113) and privileges aesthetic ‘depth’ (PA 16). Through close examination of the Poetics, I build upon and extend Rancière’s framework. I argue that reading Aristotle’s sidelining of material performance alongside the elements of the representative regime reveals an ‘anti-optical’ procedure that splits spectating from viewing. Furthermore, Aristotle’s discussion of poetic composition has the effect of grounding art in the ‘good’ activity and intelligence of the poet’s artistic
skill. The overall result is the separation of ‘art’ from ‘spectacle’, which I suggest also functions to separate ‘good’ and ‘bad’ audiences. In these ways, I aim to show that Rancière’s representative regime of art can be usefully extended through the re-examination of the Poetics.

In Chapter 3, I advance my analysis by considering Aristotle’s discussion of musical education in Politics 8. I argue that Politics 8 offers an important but unrecognized conceptual context for Rancière’s analysis of political spectatorship and the representative regime of art. Via examination of the Athenian theatre I identify an opposition between critical aesthetic judgement (‘krisis’), and the cheering applause and ‘riotous noise’ of mass audiences (‘thorubos’). This opposition is most clearly expressed in Plato’s contrast in The Laws’ discussion of music between educated judges and democratic audiences. I argue that the krisis/thorubos opposition forms a distribution of the sensible which is evident in Politics 8 as a contrast between a capacity and its lack; elite, educated spectatorship participates in the artwork through the activity of judgement, while vulgar audiences merely view. The capacity of krisis functions as an ‘account’ of spectatorship that differentiates it from viewing (Da 22-23). My examination of Aristotle’s guidelines regarding the musical education of citizens in Politics 8 establishes that Aristotle ‘polices’ spectatorship by grounding the capacity for spectatorship in wider partitions of labour, time, and intellectual capacity in the state. Aristotle ‘redeems’ spectating from ignorance and passivity by separating the artwork from spectacle, and spectating from viewing. Aristotle thereby re-confirms the ills of viewing by characterizing it as passive, ignorant, and non-participatory.
Rancière’s formulation of the ‘spectator paradox’ follows his approach of intervention into debates through the investigation and problematization of common assumptions underpinning a given set of ideas. As Rancière writes – in the third-person – of his own methodology, his interventions have always been provoked by situations in which the question ‘where am I now?’ appeared to him able to overlap with a wider question ‘where are we now?’. ‘Where are we?’ means two things at once: ‘how can we characterize the situation in which we live, think and act to-day?’, but also, by the same token: ‘how does the perception of this situation oblige us to reconsider the framework we use to “see” things and map situations, to move within this framework or get away from it?; or, in other words, ‘how does it urge us to change our very way of determining the coordinates to the “here and now”?’. 

(A Few Remarks’ 114-5; orig. emphasis)

He then adds that ‘the works of Rancière are not “theories of”, they are “interventions on”. They are polemical interventions’ (116). Through such interventions, Rancière offers ways of re-examining the framing of a given debate in order to think how the frame determines in advance the possibilities of action. As Rancière states of the spectator paradox, it

pertains to the curious device that adopts Plato’s prohibition of theatre for theatre. Accordingly, it is these principles that should
be re-examined today. Or, rather, it is the network of presuppositions, the set of equivalences and oppositions that underpin their possibility . . . .

(E5 7)

This thesis responds to Rancière's invitation by demonstrating Aristotle's contribution to the terms of the paradox. By doing so, I also suggest the importance of spectatorship for Rancière's thought as a whole by highlighting how the ability to “see” things and map situations’ is taken to be a capacity of the privileged few (Rancière ‘A Few Remarks’, 115). If, as Hallward suggests, Rancière's notion of equality is 'theatocratic', then the inequalities embedded in the distance between 'looking' and 'seeing' warrant investigation.
Chapter 1. Rancière: Politics, Aesthetics and the Spectator

Paradox

1.1 Introduction

'There is no art without eyes that see it as art' (Rancière, Future of the Image 72).

The aim of this chapter is to arrive at an in-depth understanding of Rancière’s critique of theories of political spectatorship, and to identify the utility of its expansion. I argue that Rancière’s identification of the ‘spectator paradox’ in The Emancipated Spectator alludes to elements of Aristotle’s Poetics and to Rancière’s own formulation of the ‘representative regime’ of art. Despite the importance of Aristotle for Rancière’s thought, the connection remains unexplored. This thesis addresses Rancière’s apparent silence through an in-depth analysis of the Poetics and Politics 8 to further develop the critical reach of the spectator paradox. To achieve this, careful explication of Rancière’s political and aesthetic framework is required. As discussed in the Introduction, Rancière’s argumentative procedure is both glancing and allusive (Lavender 308).

Accordingly, this chapter elucidates a number of Rancière’s key terms and conceptual readings, providing both a nuanced understanding of the spectator paradox, and a conceptual framework for my investigation of Aristotle in Chapters 2 and 3. My intention is therefore to situate the key problematic of the spectator paradox in relation to Rancière’s wider thought, and point to a number
of conceptual distinctions that prompt further exploration in the chapters that follow.

In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Rancière states that in order to critique theories of political spectatorship ‘[i]t was necessary to outline the general model of rationality against whose background we have become used to judging the political implications of theatrical spectacle’ (2). As I noted in the Introduction, this leads Rancière to identify the ‘paradox of the spectator’, in which spectating is necessary for theatre but ‘[t]o be a spectator is to be separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act’ (*ES* 2). Rancière’s claim is that the paradox originates in Plato’s prohibition of theatre, and is the result of a set of presuppositions, equivalences, and oppositions:

> equivalences between theatrical audience and community, gaze and passivity, exteriority and separation, mediation and simulacrum; oppositions between the collective and the individual, the image and living reality, activity and passivity, self-ownership and alienation.

(*ES* 7)

For Rancière, the spectator paradox forms a ‘distribution of the sensible’, or an ‘*a priori* distribution of the positions and capacities and incapacities attached to these positions’ that ‘are embodied allegories of inequality’ (*ES* 12). I argue that Aristotle’s descriptions of art and musical education constitute a major contribution to the terms of the distribution that has not yet been examined. As I aim to demonstrate in Chapters 2 and 3, Aristotle’s separation of educated
spectatorship from ignorant viewership produces intellectual hierarchies that are grounded in political divisions of labour and time in the state. My expansion of Rancière’s ‘representative regime’ via a close examination of Aristotle enables a deeper understanding of the operations of the spectator paradox.

I begin by outlining Rancière’s notions of equality, ‘politics’, ‘police’, and the ‘distribution of the sensible’. This serves to elucidate Rancière’s critical framework, and forms the methodology for my examination of Aristotelian spectatorship in the next two chapters. In my discussion of the distribution of the sensible, I arrive at an initial understanding of the distinction between ‘spectating’ and ‘viewing’ that underpins my reading of Politics 8 in Chapter 3. I then outline Rancière’s ‘ethical regime of images’, in which he analyses Plato’s attacks on artistic representation. The ethical regime is an important conceptual foundation for Rancière’s critique of spectatorship, and also provides a conceptual counterpoint to my discussion in Chapter 2 of the ‘representative regime’ of art; in place of the ‘flatness’ of images in the ethical regime, the representative regime foregrounds the ontological ‘depth’ of art. I then turn to a discussion of The Emancipated Spectator, and identify Rancière’s apparent allusion to the Aristotelian representative regime. By examining a range of avant-garde dramaturges – including Bertolt Brecht, Antonin Artaud, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Franco Marinetti, and Augusto Boal – I illuminate the value of the paradox for analysing assumptions and oppositions in contemporary spectatorship. Further investigation of the paradox via Aristotle is productive for locating the intellectual inequalities inherent in such theories.
1.2 Politics, Police, and the Distribution of the Sensible

Rancière’s thought can be characterized as a prolonged engagement with radical equality. As Hallward states, ‘[a]gainst all those who argue that only the appropriately educated or the privileged are authorized to think and speak, Jacques Rancière’s most fundamental assumption is that everyone thinks’ (140). Throughout his work, Rancière’s central aim is to critique discourses that distinguish between those who are authorized to think, speak, or lead and those whose lack of qualification excludes them from participation. One of Rancière’s central contentions is that this exclusion occurs on an aesthetic level, in the determination of whose voice is heard or not heard within a given social space. For Rancière, politics is the contestation of the ‘visibility’ of subjects: ‘[p]olitics is primarily conflict over the existence of a common stage and over the existence and status of those present on it’ (Da 26-25). Politics ‘turns on equality as its principle’ (Da ix), meaning that it is enacted through the disruption of given roles and capacities. As Hallward continues, ‘[t]hat “everyone thinks” means that they think in the absence of any necessary link between who they are and the roles they perform or the places they occupy; everyone thinks through the freedom of their own self-disassociation’ (141). For Rancière, politics results from the axiomatic equality of all subjects.

The roots of Rancière’s conception of equality are evident in his early work. Originally published in 1974, his first major work, Althusser’s Lesson, critiques the Marxist theory of his mentor Louis Althusser for his divisions of intellectual labour. In Althusser’s division, workers were to receive enlightened guidance from the French Communist Party intellectuals – such as Althusser himself – who could dedicate their time to the activity of thinking and thus direct ‘true’
revolution. For Rancière, this encoded a hierarchical pedagogy between the 'thinkers' and those whose activities robbed them of the time and capacity for thought. Rancière's *The Nights of Labor*, originally published in 1981, further addresses hierarchical assumptions that workers can do nothing but work by examining the archival records of nineteenth-century workers who, despite long working hours, wrote poetry and recounted weekend journeys to the countryside. As Rancière later writes in *The Emancipated Spectator* of his earlier research,

> [t]hese workers, who should have supplied me with information on working conditions and forms of class consciousness, provided me with something altogether different: a sense of similarity, a demonstration of equality. They too were spectators and visitors within their own class. Their activity as propagandists could not be separated from their idleness as strollers and contemplators. The simple chronicle of their leisure dictated reformulation of the established relations between *seeing*, *doing* and *speaking*.

(19; orig. emphasis)

The workers’ demonstration of equality involved the disruption of places, times and capacities, as they freed themselves from their ‘working-class’ roles. Importantly, Rancière here links emancipated spectatorship to the dissolution of established capacities and relations. As I discuss in Chapter 3, Aristotle by contrast explicitly links spectatorship to the division of citizens of leisure and workers who have ‘no time’ to think. In *Politics* 8, Aristotle stipulates that
citizens should not undertake forms of labour because such activities ‘make the mind preoccupied, and unable to rise above lowly things’ (*Politics* 8.2, 454).

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, originally published in 1987, Rancière further addresses pedagogical hierarchies by drawing on the nineteenth-century thinker Joseph Jacotot. In place of traditional pedagogies in which knowledge is ‘transmitted’ from teacher to student, Rancière outlines Jacotot’s startling assertion that anybody could teach anybody else something neither person knows (*Ignorant Schoolmaster* 14). Through Jacotot, Rancière critiques hierarchical pedagogies in which the teacher creates and maintains a distance ‘between the taught material and the person being instructed, the distance also between learning and understanding’ (*IS* 5). For Rancière, such relationships ‘stultify’ through the logic of explication, reinforcing the gap between teacher and student: ‘[t]o explain something to someone is first of all to show him that he cannot understand it by himself’ (*IS* 6). As Rancière writes in *The Emancipated Spectator*, stultification teaches the student her own ignorance and inability, confirming an inequality of intelligence (9). In contrast, the emancipating teacher ‘does not teach his pupils his knowledge, but orders them to venture into the forest of things and signs, to say what they have seen and what they think of what they have seen, to verify it and have it verified’ (*ES* 11; orig. emphasis). The equality of intelligences, as outlined in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, is a key aspect of emancipated spectatorship and informs my analysis of Aristotle in the next two chapters. Aristotle’s privileging of the ‘good intelligence’ of the poet in the *Poetics* requires spectators of a similar intellectual capacity – found in the educated citizens of *Politics* 8. Spectators, in the representative regime, must be
taught ‘how to see’, enabling them to recognize the poet’s intelligent ordering of materials embodied in the artwork.

Rancière’s redefinition of politics as the staging of equality builds on his concept of emancipation. This redefinition, consisting of the opposition between politics and police, stages an intervention. Oliver Davis argues that the opposition between ‘the police’ and ‘politics’ and the renaming of what is normally thought of as politics as ‘policing’ is a twisting of the ordinary usage of both terms which blurs their ‘proper’ meanings and dramatizes the conflict between them.

(Jacques Rancière 76; orig. emphasis)

Through redefinition, Rancière critiques the relationship between politics and philosophy. Rancière’s antagonistic engagement with the political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle forms the underlying motivation behind his formulation of the ethical and representative regimes; in aesthetics as well as in political philosophy, both thinkers attempt to ‘police’ the ‘real’ of politics.

The core of the conflict between politics and philosophy can be outlined via Rancière’s discussion of democracy, which he defines as the ‘institution of politics as such, of politics as a paradox’ (Ds 50). The paradoxical nature of democracy stems from its lack of foundation, or ‘arkhê’, which Rancière defines as ‘a theoretical principle entailing a clear distribution of positions and capacities, grounding the distribution of power between rulers and ruled’ (Ds 51). Democracy lacks an arkhê that would determine the distribution of roles within a society, and instead consists in the possibility of leadership by anybody,
irrespective of qualification \((Ds\ 51)\). This ‘anybody’ is the \textit{demos}, or the ‘surplus community made up of those who have no qualification to rule, which means at once everybody and anyone at all’ \((Ds\ 53)\). For Rancière, the story of political philosophy from Plato onwards is an attempt to replace the groundlessness of democracy with an \textit{arkhè}, thus anchoring social order in roles and capacities. A key aspect of the representative regime of spectatorship, I argue, is a procedure that regulates art by limiting the gaze of the \textit{demos}, or the ‘anybody whoever’. As we shall see, this is evident in the anti-optical procedures of the \textit{Poetics}, and the audience divisions of \textit{Politics} 8.

Rancière terms Plato’s and Aristotle’s displacements of politics as ‘archipolitics’ and ‘parapolitics’ respectively \((Ds\ 65)\). As Rancière states, the philosophers’ response to the threat of the contingency of democracy is ‘to achieve politics by eliminating politics, by achieving philosophy “in place” of politics’ \((Ds\ 63)\). Instead of politics, both philosophers enact ‘police’ by assigning roles and forms of participation to subjects. For Rancière, ‘the police’ is ‘an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned to a particular place and task’ \((Ds\ 29)\). The police’ does not refer to actual police-forces. Instead, ‘[p]olicing is not so much the “disciplining” of bodies as a rule governing their appearing, a configuration of \textit{occupations} and the properties of the spaces where those occupations are distributed’ \((Ds\ 29;\ orig.\ emphasis)\). Police-orders limit politics by determining the manner in which groups are seen or not seen – whose voice is taken as speech and whose remains mere noise. As Hallward notes, ‘the police’ is in effect ‘anti-spectacular’: ‘[r]ather than solicit a submissive recognition or response, ‘the police’ dismantles political stages by telling would-be spectators
that there is nothing to watch’ (147). Archipolitics and parapolitics therefore represent alternative procedures for limiting politics, and operate through different distributions of the sensible, as I explain shortly.

For Plato and Aristotle, the *demos* – or the ‘anybody whoever’ – embodies the threatening contingency of democracy. As I argue in Chapter 3, what both philosophers seek to limit in the theatre is the participation of the *demos* in the democratic judgement of art. This is evident in Plato’s opposition between the judgement (‘*krisis*’) of the educated few, and the riotous noise (‘*thorubos*’) of the mass audience (*Laws* 94; 2.658-9). Plato’s fear is of the influence such audiences have on the quality of the artwork, as poets and composers pander to their tastes. A similar concern is evident in *Politics* 8, when Aristotle specifies that citizen-students must not play instruments professionally for fear of developing a taste for the common pleasure of music, a pleasure ‘which appeals even to some animals, and also to a great many slaves and children’ (469; 8.6). Both instances exhibit alternative means of policing democratic spectatorship through what Rancière terms the ‘distribution of the sensible’ (*partage du sensible*).

The distribution of the sensible is a key conceptual tool that describes the constitution of structures of thought that limit the equality of the ‘anybody whoever’. Rancière calls

the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the

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5 Alternative translations sometimes render ‘*partage*’ as ‘partition’ and ‘*sensible*’ as ‘perceptible’. As Davide Panagia notes, the term relies on the double meaning of the French verb ‘*partager*’ as both sharing (the establishment of commonness) and division (the separation of participation in the common element) (95).
respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution.

(PA 12)

A distribution of the sensible is the aesthetic constitution of a given police-order. As I noted in the Introduction, the distribution of the sensible operates at an a-priori level; Rancière defines it as a ‘primary aesthetics’ that precedes questions of ‘aesthetic practices’ or activities that might be called artistic (PA 13). This means that the distribution of the sensible functions as a key conceptual link between Rancière’s accounts of politics and aesthetics.

A paradigmatic example of a distribution of the sensible occurs in Plato’s ‘archipolitical’ framework. In place of the groundlessness and contingency of democracy, Plato founds his ideal city-state on the ordering of people according to capacities, activities, and times. For Plato, a shoe-maker should remain a shoe-maker, for each person’s ‘natural aptitudes’ suit a specific craft (Republic 57; 2.370b,). The shoe-maker must not wander from his task, for ‘[i]t is fatal in any job to miss the right moment for action’; ‘[q]uantity and quality are therefore more easily produced when a man specializes appropriately on a single job for which he is naturally fitted, and neglects all others’ (57; 2.370b-c). The benefit for the city is in the harmonious working of subjects, each with his proper task,
place, and time, with thinking reserved solely for the philosopher-kings. In Rancière’s reading of Plato, artisans are only part of the community ‘thanks to making the works for which nature has exclusively intended them... thanks to only performing their function, to having no other space-time than what is required by their trade’ (Ds 66). In Plato’s archipolitical distribution, each person directly enacts community via harmonious activity ‘with nothing left over’ (Ds 65). As the next two sections of this chapter show, Plato’s archipolitical distribution is a key motivation for his attack on both art and spectatorship. In Rancière’s reading, Plato is primarily concerned with preserving a police order that eliminates politics by limiting bodies to specific spaces, times and capacities. Rancière’s assertion, then, is that the limitation of art and spectatorship is foremost a limitation of politics.

Aristotle, by contrast to Plato, engages in ‘parapolitics’, which functions by ‘transforming the actors and forms of the political conflict into the parts and forms of distribution of the policing apparatus’ (Da 72). The distribution at play here is best seen in Aristotle’s definition of the citizen. In Book 3 of the Politics Aristotle states that ‘[w]hat effectively distinguishes the citizen proper from all others is his participation in giving judgement and in holding office’ (169; 3.1). Yet the political nature of humans is in turn demarcated by participation in speech, or logos, as Aristotle outlines in Book 1:

[b]ut obviously a man is a political animal in a sense in which a bee is not, or any other gregarious animal. Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech. Speech is something
different from voice, which is possessed by other animals also and
used by them to express pain or pleasure; for their nature does
indeed enable them not only to feel pleasure and pain but to
communicate these feelings to each other. Speech, on the other
hand serves to indicate what is useful and harmful, and so also
what is just and unjust.

(60; 1.2)

The citizen’s participation in judgement and governance is predicated on the
power of speech. As Rancière argues, Aristotle here creates an aesthetic division
between the expressive power of speech, or logos, to indicate the ‘useful and
harmful’, and of voice, which merely indicates pleasure and pain (Da 2). Hence,
what counts as politics for Aristotle is first of all grounded in the primary
distribution that determines ‘those who have a part in the community of citizens’
(PA 12). This distribution is aesthetic, and separates the capacity of ‘good speech’
from mere animal noise.

The capacity for speech is a measure of political participation: Aristotle
states that a slave is defined as ‘he that participates in reason so far as to
recognize it but not so as to possess it’ (Politics 1.5, 69). Caught in the space
between animal and citizen, the slave is defined as slave by exclusion from logos;
slaves thus have ‘no part’ in the political realm, which they can only observe. This
reveals the manner in which Aristotle’s parapolitical distribution produces a
division between the activity of participation in politics and logos, and of
passivity understood as mere observation without participation. In Chapter 3, I
extend Rancière’s account of the distribution of speech and noise by examining
Aristotle's divisions of spectatorship. Spectatorship, for Aristotle, is conceived of as more than viewing by participating in the activity of the artwork through the capacity of aesthetic judgement. The capacity of judgement – or ‘krisis’ – functions as an ‘account’ of spectatorship, that in turn depends upon and presupposes the intelligence of the spectator. Viewing, by contrast, is demarcated as non-participatory and passive. Viewing, like the slaves’ recognition of speech, is the degraded form of spectatorship that witnesses but does not participate. This distribution, I argue, underpins both the political and aesthetic spheres for Aristotle; those who view have ‘no part’ in the activity of the artwork or political rule.

While the distribution of the sensible determines forms of exclusion, it also provides the means of emancipation through the expression of commonality. Although slaves, for Aristotle, cannot participate in logos, they are able to recognize and understand it. For Rancière this demonstrates the inherent equality of all subjects; the very fact that slaves can recognize logos ‘stages’ their equality. In dividing or distinguishing between forms of participation, the distribution also shares this aspect as pre-given to the whole of the community. Davide Panagia notes that the distribution of the sensible is thus not simply ‘an external structural arrangement that imposes form and function upon heterogeneous elements’, such as an ideological apparatus; rather, the power of the concept ‘is to introduce the possibility of discomposing the inequalities that such structures produce’ (99-100). The distribution is at once both a limitation upon radical equality and a staging of its existence. As Panagia puts it, the
inequality of a *partage du sensible* that establishes a hierarchy between those who know and those who do not know, between those whose viewing provides good interpretations and those who passively look, thus holds the potential for its own dissolution. If the line of partition is the point of contact between sharing and division that structures the dynamics of a *partage du sensible*, then Rancière always holds open the possibility of a political part-taking ("avoir-part") by those who have no-part.

(102)

The part-taking of those who have no-part constitutes the operation of politics for Rancière, and is made possible by disruptions to a given order: people out of place, slaves partaking in the beautiful speech of *logos*, or the nineteenth-century workers who left their workplaces to wander the countryside and write poetry. Rancière states that

> [p]olitics breaks with the sensory self-evidence of the 'natural' order that destines specific individuals and groups to occupy positions of rule or of being ruled, assigning them to private or public lives, pinning them down to a certain time and space, to specific 'bodies', that is to specific ways of being, seeing and saying.

(*Ds* 139)

In Rancière’s framework, ‘politics’ is enacted through the disruption of distributions of the sensible which anchor subjects to roles, spaces, times, and
capacities. As I will discuss in the next section, art, for Rancière, is political inasmuch as it produces such disruption. In Rancière’s reading, the disruptive nature of art is first diagnosed by Plato, who responds by banning art from the ideal state. The ‘ethical regime of images’ describes the art-paradigm through which Plato polices art’s capacity for dissensus.

1.3 The Regimes of Art: The Ethical Regime of Images

In his conceptualisation of the ethical, representative and aesthetic art regimes, Rancière draws attention to the political nature of artistic paradigms. Art, like other social practices, involves an ordering of bodies and activities; ‘[a]rtistic practices are “ways of doing and making” that intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making’ (PA 13). The ethical and representative regimes are found in Plato’s and Aristotle’s discussions of art respectively. The regimes thus extend from the archipolitical or parapolitical distributions of each philosopher. Unlike the representative regime, which Rancière identifies in the writing of the neoclassicist tragedians Corneille and Racine, the ethical regime does not exist in a specific historical era. Yet the ethical regime arguably has a large influence, as evidenced by Rancière’s discussion of the modern influence of the spectator paradox. Jean-Philippe Deranty notes that while the art-regimes construct a loose genealogy they are not strictly historical but ‘meta-historical categories’ (‘Regimes of the Arts’ 119). In the following explication of the ethical regime, I further outline how Rancière takes art to be ‘political’, provide the crucial context for my discussion of The
Emancipated Spectator, and establish conceptual reference-points for my examination of the representative regime in Chapter 2. In my elucidation of the representative regime and the Poetics in Chapter 2, I will outline how Aristotle provides art with its own ‘space’ while also containing the political threat identified by Plato.

The ethical regime is characterised by the fact that, for Plato, “‘art’ is not identified as such but is subsumed under the question of images” (PA 20). In his famous attacks on poetry in the Republic, Plato does not provide art with its own ontological ‘space’. Instead, Rancière argues that ‘[i]n this regime, it is a matter of knowing in what way images’ mode of being affects the ethos, the mode of being of individuals and communities. This question prevents “art” from individualizing itself as such’ (PA 21). By denying the status of ‘art’ as commonly understood, the ethical regime configures a certain kind of visibility of images; for Plato, it is a case of distinguishing ‘true’ arts based on ethical effect from ‘false’ simulacra.

In Rancière’s reading, Plato find images troubling not simply because of their origin and effect, but because of their ability to disrupt the archipolitical order of the community. In the Republic, Plato first chastises drama due to its interference in the republican model of the state that would confine each person to his or her proper role, leading Rancière to argue that the

question of fiction is first a question regarding the distribution of places. From the Platonic point of view, the stage, which is simultaneously a locus of public activity and the exhibition-space
for 'fantasies', disturbs the clear partition of identities, activities, and spaces.

*(PA 13)*

Before passing moral judgement on the use of stories in children’s education, Plato’s attention is on the disruption that drama brings to the order of bodies in the state. The mimetician, in Rancière’s reading, is a ‘double being’ who ‘provides a public stage for the “private” principle of work’ *(PA 42-43).* The theatre therefore disrupts the distribution that would confine each person to their specific task: ‘[i]t removes the artisan from “his” place, the domestic space of work, and gives him “time” to occupy the space of public discussions and take on the identity of a deliberative citizen’ *(PA 43).* The ethical regime’s censoring of images thus maintains the archipolitical police-order. By attempting to contain the disruptive threat of images, the ethical regime at the same time identifies their political nature. Part of this nature stems from the ‘flatness’ of images, which disrupts pedagogical relationships:

*[f]or Plato, writing and painting were equivalent surfaces of mute signs, deprived of the breath that animates and transports living speech. Flat surfaces, in this logic, are not opposed to depth in the sense of three-dimensional surfaces. They are opposed to the ‘living’. The mute surface of depicted signs stands in opposition to the act of ‘living’ speech, which is guided by the speaker towards its appropriate addressee.*

*(PA 15)*
Mimetic images are flat, deprived of the life and ‘depth’ of speech that ensures proper education. Images are not ‘flat’ because of their surfaces, but because of their immutable silence; written words can be read by anyone anywhere, without guarantee of proper pedagogical guidance. As Plato states in *Phaedrus*,

> [t]he offspring of painting stand there as if alive, but if you ask them a question they maintain an aloof silence. . . . Once any account has been written down, you find it all over the place, hobnobbing with completely inappropriate people no less than those who understand it, and completely failing to know who it should and shouldn’t talk to.

(70; 275d-e)

Images remain silent, no matter how one interrogates them, and are thus unable to be defended, or prevented from addressing the wrong people. Like the workers in Rancière’s *The Nights of Labor*, images are free to wander the countryside, hobnobbing with anybody at all. Similarly, in the *Republic* Plato’s Socrates notes that unlike a ‘real bed’, one cannot interrogate a painting of a bed by turning it this way and that to view different angles (10.598a-b). For Plato, images are disruptive, and their ‘flatness’ breaks the pedagogical relationship of speech that addresses the appropriate audience. Part of the threat of images for Plato is therefore the threat of ‘wrong’ audiences.

Rancière’s reading of Plato is important for my discussion of the representative regime of art in the next two chapters. As Rancière argues, in the
representative regime the ‘depth’ of art replaces the ‘flatness’ of images. This is
evident in the *Poetics*, in which the disruptive nature of images is neutralised by
transforming them into art imbued with the depth of speech or *logos*. I argue that
the political effect for spectatorship is to ensure that ‘true’ art addresses the
appropriate audience. The relationship of spectating in the *Poetics* is one of a
pedagogical transmission of the ‘intelligence’ embodied in poetic composition via
art to the appropriate audience. In *Politics 8*, Aristotle constructs an ideal
audience of citizens educated in the skill of critical judgement – the contingent
audience of the ‘anyone whoever’ remain excluded from ideal spectatorship.
Rancière’s own political and aesthetic framework therefore provides a means by
which to extend the representative regime through a more thorough
consideration of spectatorship.

Rancière contrasts Plato’s attacks on the ‘bad’ arts of writing, theatre, and
painting to the ideal of the ‘choreographic community’, which serves to anchor
the ethical regime (*PA* 14). This ideal is located in Plato’s discussion of musical
education in *Laws*, in which he addresses participation in the music and dance of
the chorus, which trains its members in appropriate bodily movement (*Laws*
2.654). Here the educated citizen is defined by his expertise in singing and
dancing, provided that appropriately ethical melodies are enforced by the state.
The result is three forms of chorus, appealing to the young, the mature, and the
elderly respectively (2.664). The chorus functions as an aesthetic ideal of the
community for Plato precisely because of its reproduction of the Platonic
distribution; each person directly imitates the ethical nature of music, and each
person sings and dances in harmony according to their proper place. Such is the case even to the extent that the elderly, who might otherwise resist, must be induced to get drunk to remove their inhibitions and entice them to dance (2.665e-666c).

The choreographic community privileges direct bodily participation, embodying the harmonious, well-ordered community and dispensing with the troubling disruption of images. In place of the mediation of flat images, Plato proposes direct education through music and dance, an aesthetic constitution of the community in which everybody must participate, even at the price of coercion. As we shall see, Rancière reads this Platonic ideal as the foundation of modern trends in spectatorship; above all, the spectator must ‘overcome the gulf separating activity from passivity’ (*ES* 12). The ethical regime’s policing of the political nature of art operates by limiting aesthetic mediation. This limitation and the privileging of direct aesthetic participation is a key feature of the spectator paradox.

### 1.4 The Spectator Paradox

The ethical regime of art underpins Rancière’s critique of spectatorship in *The Emancipated Spectator*. For Rancière, theories that seek the politicization of spectatorship do so on the basis of a distribution that reproduces the Platonic attack on aesthetic mediation. Rancière’s aim is therefore to intervene in such

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6 The idealisation of the chorus as the embodiment of community was prevalent in Greek thought. As Yun Lee Too notes, ‘[f]ollowing on from the idea that education is a strategy of socialization, choral language and action are also perceived to be an enactment of the *polis* and its order. Classical authors characterize the ordered chorus as a paradigm for the harmonious and well-governed city; in particular, they portray the proficient chorus-leader (*chorēgos*) as a model for the good leader’ (91-2).
debates by demonstrating that attempts to rouse or redeem spectators from inherent passivity and ignorance in fact ‘police’ the inherent intellectual equality of all viewing subjects. However, as I outline in this section, Rancière’s discussion of the ‘relationship of drama’ in *The Emancipated Spectator* appears to allude to an Aristotelian influence – the primacy of ‘action’ in art – that he does not sufficiently develop. While Rancière argues that the spectator paradox originates in Plato's attacks on spectatorship, he does not undertake significant discussion of the representative regime in relation to his critique. In what follows, I suggest that the implications of the spectator paradox, when examined via a number of avant-garde theorists, establishes the need for a more thorough investigation of the Aristotelian influence.

According to the spectator paradox, ‘[t]o be a spectator is to be separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act’ (*ES 3*). This results in two conclusions. The first is

> that theatre is an absolutely bad thing: a scene of illusion and passivity that must be abolished in favour of what it prohibits – knowledge and action; the action of knowing and action guided by knowledge. This is the conclusion formulated by Plato: theatre is the place where ignoramuses are invited to see people suffering.

(*ES 2-3*)

In the ethical regime, the mediation of images is deemed bad because it instils bad *ethos* in the community. Spectating is ‘bad’ not simply because of the moral content of plays or artworks, but because of the relationship of audiences to the
simulacra presented, which produces ‘the illness of the gaze in thrall to shades’ (ES 3). For Plato, the theatre’s status as simulacra means that spectating results in an epistemological ‘illness’ that reinforces the audience’s ignorance. As Rancière puts it, the theatre ‘transmits the illness of ignorance that makes the characters suffer through a machinery of ignorance, the optical machinery that prepares the gaze for illusion and passivity’ (ES 3). The problem for Plato is both ethical and epistemological; the mediation of the theatre stands in contrast to the choreographic community, ‘in which the measure that governs the community is directly incorporated into the living attitudes of its members’ (ES 3). The Platonic solution to the spectator paradox banishes theatrical mediation in favour of direct bodily participation.

The second conclusion drawn from the paradox is that spectatorship itself must be reformed. This solution predominates ‘among critics of theatrical mimesis’ who have ‘invariably retained the premises [of the paradox] while changing the conclusion’ (ES 3). In this line of thought, the solution is not to ban theatrical mediation but to rescue the spectator from passivity and ignorance:

[w]e therefore need a different theatre, a theatre without spectators: not a theatre played out in front of empty seats, but a theatre where the passive optical relationship implied by the very term is subjected to a different relationship – that implied by another word, on which refers to what is produced on the stage: 

*drama*. Drama means action. Theatre is the place where an action

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7 In the 2007 essay version of his argument, Rancière calls this ‘the disease of the empirical vision that looks at shadows’ (Rancière 2007 272).
is taken to its conclusion by bodies in motion in front of living bodies that are to be mobilized.

(ES 3; orig. emphasis)

Attempts to ‘redeem’ spectatorship, according to Rancière, are predicated on the substitution of ‘theatre’ for ‘drama’. A comparison to the original essay version of *The Emancipated Spectator* is instructive: here Rancière states that ‘[w]e need a theater where the optical relation – implied in the word *theatron* – is subjected to another relation, implied in the word *drama’* (‘The Emancipated Spectator’ 272; orig. emphasis). The alternative solutions to the spectator paradox – either the Platonic banishment of mediation or the reformation of spectatorship – are therefore alternative modes of the underlying distribution of the sensible.

While not explicitly stated in Rancière’s argument, the ‘dramatic’ model of spectator-reform appears to allude to key elements of the representative regime of art. As I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, the regime, which takes the *Poetics* as its paradigmatic example, is predicated on the representation and transmission of action to the audience. This is conceptualised by two principles of the representative regime: the ‘principle of fiction’, and the ‘principle of presence’. According to the ‘principle of fiction’, the essence of an artwork is located ‘in the fact that it is an imitation, a representation of actions’ (*Mute Speech* 44). The principle of fiction is exemplified by the repeated reference to action as the object of mimesis in the *Poetics* (17; 1448a, 19; 1448a). In addition, Aristotle specifically connects the etymology of the word ‘drama’ (‘*drôntas’*) to the ‘imitation . . . of men acting’ (19; 1448a). The ‘principle of presence’, according to Rancière, ‘identifies the fictional representation of actions with a
staging of the act of speech’ (*MS 48*). The result is that the ‘action’ imitated in art
is transmitted to the audience through the ‘active’ speech of *logos*. The ideal
effect is the ‘activity’ of the audience; art in the representative regime is ‘not only
a matter of pleasing stories and discourses, but of educating minds, saving souls,
defending the innocent, giving counsel to kings, exhorting the people, haranguing
soldiers’ (*MS 48*). Art in the representative regime imitates an action to be
transmitted to the audience.

Rancière’s discussion of the relationship of drama therefore appears to
reference a distribution of the sensible located in the representative regime of
art. Rancière’s statement that ‘[t]heatre is the place where an action is taken to
its conclusion by bodies in motion in front of living bodies that are to be
mobilized’ reflects the primacy and transmission of action as encapsulated by the
principles of fiction and presence (*ES 3*). Whether the allusion is intentional or
not, it is clear that the representative regime of art warrants further
investigation in light of the spectator paradox. As the previous sections of this
chapter have highlighted, there are a number of elements of Rancière’s political
and aesthetic thought that provide a framework for such an undertaking. In
addition, Rancière’s use of the spectator paradox as a critical tool for analysing
the theatrical avant-garde suggests its importance for theories of spectatorship.

For Rancière, the ‘dramatic’ model of spectator-reform is the implicit
foundation of avant-garde theories of spectatorship. For such theories, it is a case
of recovering the spectator from passivity and ignorance through the distinction
between ‘true’ theatre and degraded spectacle (*ES 4*). Rancière outlines two
main paradigms of such reform, in the projects of Bertolt Brecht and Antonin
Artaud, which Rancière terms ‘distanced investigation’ and ‘vital participation’ respectively (5). In the Brechtian paradigm,

the spectator must be roused from the stupefaction of spectators enthralled by appearances and won over by the empathy that makes them identify with the characters on stage. He will be shown a strange, unusual spectacle, a mystery whose meaning he must seek out. He will thus be compelled to exchange the position of passive spectator for that of scientific investigator or experimenter, who observes phenomena and searches for their causes.

(ES 4)

The Brechtian paradigm takes the spectator’s identification with the surface of images to be problematic, acting counter to critical – or dialectical materialist – understanding. The illusory nature of theatrical images occurs via emotional and psychological seduction. The audience’s sympathy for the characters on stage results in an acceptance of the events depicted, and a view of history as static, showing the world ‘as it is’ rather than ‘as it changes’ (Brecht 79). Critical distance must be achieved in order to disrupt the illusory effect of the theatrical image. The paradigm therefore seeks to absolve spectatorship of the ‘illness of the gaze’, in which spectacle functions as a source of bad knowledge and therefore bad community ethos.

Alternatively, in the Artaudian paradigm
it is this reasoning distance that must itself be abolished. The spectator must be removed from the position of observer calmly examining the spectacle offered to her. She must be dispossessed of this illusory mastery, drawn into the magic circle of theatrical action where she will exchange the privilege of rational observer for that of the being in possession of all her vital energies.

(ES 4)

By dissolving the boundary between audience and stage, the Artaudian paradigm immerses the spectator in the action of the drama, restoring ‘vital energies’ and countering the optical machinery whereby the audience is rendered passive and immobile before the image. An example is Artaud’s ‘theatre of cruelty’, which aims for a hypnotic, anti-representational experience: Artaud writes of a ‘theater that induces trance, as the dances of Dervishes induce trance, and that addresses itself to the organism by precise instruments, by the same means as those of certain tribal music cures’ (83). The Artaudian paradigm therefore reproduces the Platonic ideal of the choreographic community, in which direct participation counters the problematic effect of aesthetic mediation.

The two paradigms function as alternative solutions to the spectator paradox, redeeming both spectator ignorance and passivity. Rancière argues that modern reforms of the theatre oscillate between these two projects of ‘distanced investigation and vital participation’ (ES 5). Yet in doing so, such reformers have actually ‘reformulated Plato’s opposition between choros and theatre as one between the truth of the theatre and the simulacrum of the spectacle’ (ES 5). In
redeeming spectatorship of its sins, ‘theatre is presented as a mediation striving for its own abolition’ (ES 8). The spectator paradox thus continues to be reproduced in attempts to resolve it:

[t]hese oppositions – viewing/knowing, appearance/reality, activity/passivity – are quite different from logical oppositions between clearly defined terms. They specifically define a distribution of the sensible, an a priori distribution of the positions and capacities and incapacities attached to these positions. They are embodied allegories of inequality. That is why we can change the value of the terms, transform a ‘good’ term into a ‘bad’ one and vice versa, without altering the functioning of the opposition itself.

(ES 12)

The spectator paradox functions as a distribution of the sensible, establishing forms of visibility and ideas of capacity inherent in particular attitudes to spectatorship. The paradox consists in a distribution that accuses the spectator of stupidity or inherent incapability by assuming that the spectator must be taught and roused into action. As my next two chapters will show, Aristotle contributes to the terms of this distribution. Through the Poetics’ anti-optical procedures and Politics 8’s description of educated aesthetic judgement, Aristotle ‘redeems’ spectatorship from the optical machinery and the illness of the gaze that characterize the spectator paradox. Yet in order to do so, Aristotle splits spectating from viewing, in effect re-confirming the basic distribution of
the paradox. By investigating Rancière's apparent allusion to the representative regime, I expand the conceptual framework of his critique of spectatorship.

Rancière’s brief discussion of the Brechtian and Artaudian paradigms identifies the modern influence of the distribution underlying the spectator paradox. However, an in-depth examination of the theatrical avant-garde through this framework is beneficial for fleshing-out Rancière’s critique. It also establishes why investigation of the Aristotelian contribution to this paradox is important. A deeper understanding of the thematic concerns of the Brechtian and Artaudian paradigms – such as the transmission of action and the reformation of the gaze – can be achieved by tracing their aims and outcomes. In what follows, I outline the projects of Vsevolod Meyerhold and Brecht, drawing attention to their common themes of ‘critical distancing’, turning then to the privileging of ‘vital participation’ by Franco Marinetti and Artaud. I conclude with an examination of Augusto Boal, whose project blurs the distinction between both paradigms through his notion of the ‘Spect-Actor’.

The Brechtian paradigm of critical investigation is typified by the attempt to awaken critical faculties within the audience, which are then harnessed for political ends. Such tendencies can be seen in the Soviet director and producer Vsevolod Meyerhold, who wrote in the context of the post-revolution Proletkult and its focus on the promotion of proletarian culture and arts. In ‘The Reconstruction of the Theatre’ (1930), Meyerhold views theatre as ‘a means of agitation’, necessitating the ‘clarity of the message conveyed from the stage’ (253). For Meyerhold, the theatre has the power to ‘start the spectator’s brain working’ and ‘stimulate the spectator’s feelings and steer him through a complex labyrinth of emotions’; theatre that seeks to ‘limit itself to sheer rhetoric’ should
be rejected ‘as a mere debating chamber’ (253). Writing in the context of constructivist debates about the form and revolutionary purpose of proletarian art, Meyerhold aims to do away with simple didacticism and the intellectual presentation of scenes that ‘invite automatic conclusions’ (253). For Meyerhold, the audience must be central to the process of artistic production: playwrights and directors present the work ‘unfinished’ on stage, to be completed through the relationship between audience and actors (256). Rather than passively consuming plays, such audiences are included in the intellectual production of the play, a crucial element in the creative process. This is at once immersive and critical, calling for an intelligence and activity in the spectator’s reception of the artwork.

Inspired by Meyerhold’s innovations, Brecht defines his own project in radical opposition to Aristotle’s Poetics. His ‘epic theatre’ (which he interchangeably calls ‘non-Aristotelian theatre’) departs from Aristotelian tendencies that promote the audience’s emotional absorption in the characters on stage. In ‘The German Drama: Pre-Hitler’ (1936), Brecht writes of his own experiments with non-Aristotelian theatre, such as disrupting the audience from identifying with characters and experiencing catharsis:

[c]atharsis is not the main object of this dramaturgy. It does not make the hero the victim of an inevitable fate, nor does it wish to make the spectator the victim, so to speak, of a hypnotic experience in the theatre. In fact, it has as a purpose the ‘teaching’ of the spectator a certain quite practical attitude; we have to make it possible for him to take a critical attitude while he is in the
For Brecht, the psychological and emotional nature of Aristotelian theatre acts counter to historical awareness. Spectators suffer ‘with’ the characters, caught in a state of ignorance. Yet even in Brecht’s staunch opposition to Aristotelian dramaturgy a number of similarities with Aristotle’s framework persist. Chapter 3’s analysis of the division of audiences in *Politics* reveals a similar opposition between ‘critical’ spectating and pleasurable immersion. Both Aristotle and Brecht are concerned with cultivating a critical spectatorship, the difference being that for Brecht this cultivation occurs within the artwork while for Aristotle it is an issue of state education.

One of Brecht’s antidotes to spectator ignorance and passivity is the ‘alienation effect’, through which the spectator may adopt a critical attitude toward the events on stage (136). The effect is directly opposed to the illusory method of traditional theatre: for it to occur, the ‘stage and auditorium must be purged of everything “magical” and . . . no “hypnotic tensions” should be set up’ (136). Doing so allows for a renewed awareness of everyday and familiar situations, prompting the audience to question their attitudes towards an event or set of relations that are then revealed as unusual (144). Brecht gives the example of being asked whether one has ever properly examined one’s watch: the very question itself alienates the watch and makes it appear new. As Brecht states, ‘I used to look at it to see the time, and now . . . I realize that I have given up seeing the watch itself with an astonished eye; and it is in many ways an
astonishing piece of machinery’ (144). Here the very optical relationship embodied in sight is transformed from something passive and receptive (glancing at a watch to tell the time) to active (perceiving the watch in a questioning manner).

The Brechtian paradigm of distanced investigation disrupts the illusory nature of spectacle. It aims to teach not just through transmission – what Meyerhold calls ‘sheer rhetoric’ (253) – but also by teaching the spectator how to see. Reading this teaching in the light of Rancière’s notion of intellectual emancipation reveals that it presupposes the audience’s own ignorance. Within the Brechtian paradigm, then, audiences must be educated despite themselves and their way of ‘looking’ reformed. In teaching the critical attitude, such theatre seeks to transform spectators from passive viewers into actors in the world, encoding the pedagogy of ‘stultification’.

The Artaudian paradigm of ‘vital participation’ is characterized by a series of devices that aim to include the audience directly in the action and activity of the drama. The bodily passivity of the audience is equated to a social, political or existential passivity to be rectified through bodily participation. An early example of these devices is seen in the writing of the Italian Futurist Fillippo Marinetti, for whom theatre was the ideal site for the promotion of militaristic nationalism. Marinetti aimed to demolish the traditional theatre by provoking the audience out of conventional passivity. As he states in ‘The Variety Theater’ (1913), ‘[t]he Variety Theater is alone in seeking the audience’s collaboration. It doesn’t remain static like a stupid voyeur, but joins in noisily in the action’ (118). The Variety Theatre aims to provoke the audience and induce commotion: Marinetti asserts the need to ‘induce surprise and the need to move among the
spectators’ through a number of procedures such as spreading glue on seats, using itching powder, selling one seat to many people, or encouraging known eccentric trouble-makers to attend (121). In the ‘Futurist Synthetic Theater’ of 1915, Marinetti states that spectators must ‘forget the monotony of everyday life’ through the theatre, which ‘will be a gymnasium to train our race’s spirit to . . . swift, dangerous enthusiasms’ (128). Among his suggestions are the following:

SYMPHONIZE THE AUDIENCE’S SENSIBILITY BY EXPLORING IT,
STIRRING UP ITS LAZIEST LAYERS WITH EVERY MEANS
POSSIBLE; ELIMINATE THE PRECONCEPTION OF THE
FOOTLIGHTS BY THROWING NETS OF SENSATION BETWEEN
STAGE AND AUDIENCE; THE STAGE ACTION WILL INVADE THE
ORCHESTRA SEATS, THE AUDIENCE.

(128; orig. capitalisation)

The radical transformation of society can begin in the theatre, but it requires the reinvention of aesthetic sensibility through the reorganisation of spectatorship. The community of theatre becomes a privileged space standing for community at large, as opposed to individualised forms of spectatorship. Marinetti’s ‘nets of sensation’ erase boundaries between the stage and spectator-community – Marinetti also proposes the use of cigar smoke to further blur stage/audience divisions (118). Claire Bishop argues that despite the hostile appearance, Marinetti’s aims should not be read as antagonistic to audiences but as ‘spectatorphilic’, making the audience ‘visible to itself’ as audience (Artificial Hells 46; orig. emphasis). The privileging of the theatre as the embodiment and
locus of community enacts elements of Plato's choreographic community whereby audiences learn through direct, harmonious participation. It implies the inherent invisibility, passivity and individuation of traditional audiences caught in a relationship of mere viewership and consumption.

Artaud's own 'theatre of cruelty', as outlined in *The Theatre and its Double* (1938), continues these themes of immersion and participation by presenting the theatre as a visceral and metaphysical experience, akin to bodily disease. Artaud disrupts theories of representation; the events on stage exist as 'images of the plague' and 'are a spiritual force that begins its trajectory in the senses and does without reality altogether' (25). Instead, 'the action and effect of a feeling in the theater appears infinitely more valid than that of a feeling fulfilled in life' (25). For Artaud, 'the theater is a disease because it is the supreme equilibrium which cannot be achieved without destruction. It invites the mind to share a delirium which exalts its energies' (31). Spectators are not only immersed in the experience through a blurring of stage/audience divisions, but the performance itself communicates on a metaphysical level prior to representation. Hence, while Artaud advocates a form of 'total spectacle', it is not that of the mediation of image: the stage is a continuation of the world, rather than a representation of it (86). The 'truth' of theatre, for Artaud, is opposed to imagistic mediation. It consists in harnessing the primal 'activity' of the drama via direct transmission to the audience.

The paradigms of critical distance and vital participation are synthesised in the theatrical project of Augusto Boal. In *The Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974), Boal situates himself as a successor to Brecht, and similarly anchors his practice in the rejection of the Aristotelian paradigm. For Boal, Aristotle’s *Poetics* forms a
theatre of coercion or intimidation ‘for elimination of the “bad” or illegal tendencies of the audience’ (3). The central problem of the Aristotelian system is the passivity of the spectator, who ‘delegates the power of action to the character’ (30). While praising Brecht’s attempts to raise critical consciousness in the audience, Boal argues that an ‘unbridgeable gulf between the stage and audience remains’, as spectators passively receive the lessons of the actor or dramatist (xx). In contrast to traditional separations of stage and audience, Boal proposes an audience that takes possession of the stage:

[t]he members of the audience must become the Character: possess him, take his place – not obey him, but guide him, show him the path they think right. In this way the Spectator becoming the Spect-Actor is democratically opposed to the other members of the audience, free to invade the scene and appropriate the power of the actor. With their hearts and minds the audience must rehearse battle plans – ways of freeing themselves from all oppressions.  

(xx) 

For the spectator Boal substitutes the Spect-Actor, who contributes to and sculpts the scene herself, changing the events of the play on stage from ‘the vision of the world as it is into a world as it could be’ (Games for Actors and Non-Actors 20; orig. emphasis). In this way the spectator is freed to act and think for

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8 Cf. Brecht’s assertion, quoted earlier that Aristotelian theatre depicts the world ‘as it is’ rather than ‘as it changes’ (Brecht, Brecht on Theatre 79). This difference demonstrates what Davis and
herself. The problem for Boal is that the characters on stage act ‘for’ the audience; by breaking the boundaries and ‘invading’ the artwork, Spect-Actors are able to ‘appropriate the power’ of the artwork. However, like the Brechtian paradigm, Boal presumes the audiences’ inability to learn through viewing.

An example of Boal’s practice is the ‘forum theatre’, in which short scenes of injustice – such as police brutality or workplace exploitation – are staged. As Boal stresses, it is not enough for participants to talk about their solutions: ‘[a]nyone may propose any solution, but it must be done on the stage, working, acting, doing things, and not from the comfort of his seat’ (Theatre of the Oppressed 117). Participants physically change the running of the scene by taking the place of actors and assuming their roles, after which the scene is re-run allowing the Spect-Actors to guide the action toward a different conclusion. Various responses to police brutality, for example, can therefore be thought through, and the implications of each action examined. Boal emphasises the importance not of finding a solution but of investigating different possibilities through active participation. Thus, ‘[m]aybe the theatre in itself is not revolutionary, but these theatrical forms are without a doubt a rehearsal of revolution’ (Theatre of the Oppressed 119; orig. emphasis). The theatre of the oppressed functions through the blurring of mimetic boundaries: ‘[t]he stage is a representation of reality, a fiction. But the Spect-Actor is not fictional. He exists in the scene and outside of it, in a dual reality’ (xxi). Boal’s project can therefore be seen as a radical conception of literal participation that promotes both critical distancing and immersive participation. It is only through harnessing the primal

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O’Sullivan call Boal’s ‘idealistic’ method, which demonstrates a failure to adequately grasp Marxist dialectical materialism (291).
‘energy’ of the artwork that spectators are able to act within the world. Hence the ‘thinking’ that would spur – or ‘rehearse’ for – revolution is directly opposed to passive viewing.

These brief overviews indicate a range of common themes within the theatrical avant-garde that can be brought to light via the spectator paradox. Despite apparent oppositions or conflicting aims, attempts to reform spectatorship actually reproduce the Platonic distribution that condemns it. The most prominent of these themes is that viewing itself must be disrupted, reformed, or educated. For the Brechtian paradigm, this is evident in the ‘astonished eye’ produced by the alienation effect, while for Artaudian participation it is the training or reformation of sensibility itself. The underlying distribution throughout takes the spectators’ gaze as functioning counter to education or the transmission of the action of the artwork. For Rancière, this distribution reinforces the intellectual inequality via ‘stultification’, in which what ‘the pupil must learn is what the schoolmaster must teach her. What the spectator must see is what the director makes her see. What she must feel is the energy he communicates to her’ (ES 14). In attempting to educate audiences and reform the passivity or ignorance of spectatorship, such dramaturges inadvertently reproduce the pedagogical distance by which the spectator is taken to be inherently stupid.

My discussion of the varied outcomes and themes of the Brechtian and Artaudian paradigms helps to illuminate Rancière’s proposal for emancipated spectatorship. Here Rancière returns to his earlier writing on intellectual emancipation, in which there consists a ‘third thing’ between the master and the novice that is ‘alien to both’, and to which they can refer to verify what the
student can see and think (ES 14-15). Between the artist and spectator there exists the mediation of ‘the third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect’ (ES 15). The ‘third thing’ is the image itself, both indeterminate and contestable. Reading this back onto the ethical regime, we can see that what Plato takes to be a threat – the flatness of images – instead ensures the political and democratic operation of images, allowing them to address ‘anybody whoever’. The political nature of art is its capacity for dissensus, which Rancière takes to be ‘the very kernel of the aesthetic regime: artworks can produce effects of dissensus precisely because they neither give lessons nor have any destination’ (Ds 140). As Rancière further states in an interview, ‘[a]n art is emancipated or emancipating when it renounces the authority of the imposed message, the target audience, and the univocal mode of explicating the world, when, in other words, it stops wanting to emancipate us’ (Carnevale and Kelsey 258; orig. italics). Rather than seeking to teach, such art recognizes the inherent intelligence of all spectators.

1.5 Conclusion

Situating Rancière’s critique of spectatorship in The Emancipated Spectator in the context of his wider political and aesthetic thought enables a deeper understanding of the theoretical motivations underpinning his argument. As this chapter has shown, the formulation of the spectator paradox builds on fundamental aspects of Rancière’s thought, such as his conception of intellectual equality, his critique of political philosophy, and his conceptualisation of the
Platonic ethical regime of images. Rancière’s redefinition of politics challenges traditional assumptions of what is considered ‘political’ in art. In contrast to ‘the police’, which limits politics by presenting social orders as given, politics invents ‘new ways of making sense of the sensible, new configurations between the visible and the invisible, and between the audible and the inaudible, new distributions of space and time – in short, new bodily capacities’ (Ds 139).

Accordingly, what Rancière takes to be ‘political’ in art and spectatorship is not the declared message of the author or the vision of the dramaturge, but the ability to redistribute the given through ‘dissensus’, for

[a]s Plato tells us - *a contrario* - politics begins when those who were destined to remain in the domestic and invisible territory of work and reproduction, and prevented from doing ‘anything else’, take the time that they ‘have not’ in order to affirm that they belong to a common world. It begins when they make the invisible visible, and make what was deemed to be the mere noise of suffering bodies heard as a discourse concerning the ‘common’ of the community. Politics creates a new form, as it were, of *dissensual* ‘commonsense’.

(139; orig. emphasis)

By taking the time they do not ‘possess’, the workers of Rancière’s *The Nights of Labor* disrupt the archipolitical distribution that would confine each subject to his or her role and capacity. The underlying pedagogical claim of emancipated spectatorship is that spectating is ‘our normal situation’ (*ES* 17). By affirming
their commonality, the workers affirm the equality of intelligences whereby each person is able to think and able to learn from the ‘forest of things, acts and signs that confront or surround them’ (ES 16). The spectator paradox pertains to a distribution of the sensible that effects the ‘policing’ of spectating, by enacting a set of assumptions about activity and passivity, critical engagement and ignorant immersion. A common theme in the avant-garde theorists I have examined – despite their radical political aims – is the presumption of what Rancière calls a pedagogical ‘stultification’ that reproduces the students’ ignorance; in order to educate spectators, the playwright or dramaturge must first teach them how to ‘see’.

The claim of this thesis is that a major and unexamined element of such policing is evident in Aristotle’s Poetics and Politics 8. Whether or not Rancière consciously refers to the Poetics and the representative regime in his mention of drama (ES 3), the significance of Aristotle for Rancière’s aesthetic and political thought suggests the importance of such an undertaking. In my next two chapters, I investigate Aristotelian spectatorship via Rancière’s formulation of the representative regime of art in light of the key problematic of the spectator paradox. Close reading of Aristotle provides the means by which to deepen and extend Rancière’s critique because it reveals the fundamental hierarchies of intelligence encoded in theories of spectatorship. For Aristotle, spectatorship is ‘redeemed’ by distinguishing between those who look and those who see.
Chapter 2. The Poetics and Aristotle’s Anti-Optics

2.1 Introduction

Rancière’s conceptualisation of the representative regime of art is based on his reading of Aristotle’s discussion of poetry and mimesis in the Poetics. In contrast to Plato’s attacks on art that form the basis of the ethical regime, the representative regime affords art its own ontological ‘space’. However, the representative regime ‘polices’ art’s capacity for dissensus by submitting representations to questions of genre; as Davis states, ‘its most basic demand is that the representation (its genre and language) be an appropriate match for the position in the social hierarchy of the represented subject’ (Jacques Rancière 135). The aim of this chapter is to consider the implications of the representative regime for spectatorship through a close reading of Aristotle’s Poetics. I argue that Aristotle’s subordination of material performance and his privileging of the creative intelligence of poetic composition function to ‘redeem’ spectatorship from the ignorance and passivity of the spectator paradox. As I suggest, the political effect is the splitting of audiences, which is evident in Aristotle’s exclusion of vulgar audiences in the final chapter of the Poetics. I begin by examining Rancière’s description of the representative regime. I then outline the argumentative procedure of the Poetics, and undertake a close exegetical reading of Aristotle’s treatment of material performance and spectacle. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how Rancière’s representative regime can be
expanded to account for spectatorship, and to establish the implications this has for Rancière’s critique of spectatorship.

A number of critics have argued that Aristotle’s discussion of tragedy is notable for his silence on the political and civic context of tragedy in its original performance. For example, Edith Hall states that

[a]t no point does Aristotle specify the nature or constituency of his imagined theatrical audience. More importantly, no amount of special pleading can alter the fact that the Poetics goes against the grain of all previous discussions of tragedy in virtually excising from the genre not only the Athenian democratic polis, but the very notion of a polis, and of the civic context, consciousness, and function of tragic drama.

(‘Is there a Polis?’ 295-96)

Aristotle’s silence on the polis mirrors his exclusion of performance context more generally; as D. M. Carter and Mark Griffith note, ‘nowhere in the Poetics is the “Athenianess” of tragedy – nor even the actual Theatre of Dionysus – mentioned; nor is the polis or its institutions ever identified as an ‘object of representation’ or as being integral to tragic action or to the tragic effect’ (4). Hall argues that ‘absences in a text speak as loud, if not louder, than its presences’, adding that the most glaring absences are tragedy’s democratic, Athenian, and educative content, ‘whose consumer in other Athenian authors is emphatically a citizen, and specifically a citizen of the Athenian democracy’ (‘Is there a Polis?’ 296; orig.
emphasis). In the Poetics' ranking of plot elements, the subordination of music and spectacle not only ignores the 'lived experience' of tragedy; it also 'ignores the way that the actual meaning of a text can be radically affected, even altered wholesale, by the way in which it is performed' (Hall, 'Is there a Polis?' 297). Page duBois argues that Aristotle's historical distance from the height of the tragic festival, coupled with his outsider status in Athens, results in an 'administrative attitude remote from the highly charged political engagement of Athenian citizens in the new and radical democracy of the fifth century BCE' ('Toppling the Hero' 67). For duBois, Aristotle 'assumes a view from above and outside the city. . . . Tragedy becomes a site of mastery for the philosopher, who is a manager, analyst, and theoretician of the state and its elite members' (68). Aristotle’s exclusion of both the polis and performance from his treatise on tragedy is in stark contrast to Plato’s concerns about the effect of mimesis on the being and order of the community.

Rancière’s political and aesthetic framework, as outlined in the last chapter, provides the means by which to investigate the ‘political’ nature of the Poetics, despite Aristotle’s silence on the political and civic context of tragedy. Aristotle’s wider concern in the Poetics is overwhelmingly to describe and distinguish good art – in the form of successfully crafted tragedy – from bad. This, alongside Aristotle’s anti-optical exclusion of performance, presupposes spectators capable of apprehending the ‘success’ of an artwork. I suggest that Aristotle’s implied notion of idealised spectatorship, demarcated as the participation in the

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9 Hall acknowledges that this line of argument could be accused of anachronistically projecting ‘late twentieth-century socio-historicist interpretations back into the past’, taking Aristotle to task for a modern concern. Yet situating tragedy in its social and political context is not new: '[i]n almost every text where tragedy is discussed or quoted in fifth- and fourth-century Athens, including works by Aristotle other than the Poetics, such specificity is taken for granted' (297).
aesthetic ‘depth’ of the artwork, results in divisions of spectatorship that have the political effect of excluding the viewership of the ‘anybody whoever’.

2.2 The Representative Regime of Art

It is in *Mute Speech*, originally published in 1998, that Rancière first outlines the representative regime of art, framed in the context of the French neoclassicist tragedians Racine and Corneille. Rancière reads their use of the *Poetics* as exemplifying four principles – fiction, genre, decorum, and presence – that determine the visibility of artefacts as ‘artistic’. The representative regime is a ‘break’ from the requirements of the Platonic ethical regime, in which imitations must truthfully depict an original (*PA* 21). The representative regime couples mimesis with ‘poïēis’ (making/crafting/creating), meaning that ‘[i]t is the substance of the poem, the fabrication of a plot arranging actions that represent the activities of men, which is the foremost issue, to the detriment of the essence of the image, a copy examined with regard to its model’ (*PA* 21; orig. emphasis).

Rancière locates the basis of this regime in the *Poetics’s* description of artistic imitation and its stipulations for the crafting and composition of art, which result in a ‘normative principle of inclusion’ that develops into forms of normativity that define the conditions according to which imitations can be recognized as exclusively belonging to an art and assessed, within this framework, as good or bad, adequate or inadequate: partitions between genres according to what is represented; principles for adapting forms of
expression to genres and thus to the subject matter represented;
the distribution of resemblances according to principles of
verisimilitude, appropriateness, or correspondence; criteria for
distinguishing between and comparing the arts; etc.

(PA 21-22)

In place of the flatness of images that Plato finds so troubling, the representative
regime affords art its own ‘space’ within the wider distribution of human
activities. Yet in doing so, the normative conditions to which art is submitted in
turn produce a ‘regime of visibility’ that displaces its political nature (PA 22). The
representative regime therefore polices dissensus via a series of principles that
encode ‘a fully hierarchical vision of the community’ (PA 22). The four principles
of the representative regime describe what is made visible as ‘art’ and in what
manner. An overview of these principles through comparison to the Poetics is
therefore useful for gaining an understanding of Rancière’s framework.

The first principle of the representative regime, ‘fiction’, refers to the object
represented. In the Poetics the object of representation is emphatically action, or
‘praxis’. Examples are found throughout the treatise, such as when Aristotle
defines the dramatic narrative mode as ‘with all the persons who are performing
the imitation acting’ (18; 1448a), before adding that the etymology of ‘drama’
(‘drôntas’) refers to the ‘imitation of men in action’ (19; 1448a). Aristotle further
states that the plot is the most important element of tragedy ‘[f]or tragedy is an
imitation not of men but of a life, an action’ (27; 1450a). In turn, at 1451b he
states that a poet ‘should be a maker of his plots more than his verses... what he
imitates is actions’ (34). As Rancière states, the principle of fiction means that
‘the poem cannot be defined as a mode of language. A poem is a story, and its value or deficiency is in the conception of this story’ (MS 44). The principle of fiction has two outcomes. Firstly, it means that mimesis functions as a unifying principle of all ‘arts’; if art represents an action, then this action can be depicted in music, painting, or verse equally. Secondly, the principle of fiction presupposes ‘a specific space-time in which the fiction is offered and appreciated as such’ (MS 44). This is found in the ontological autonomy and illusionary nature of the artwork, the effect of which is that ‘one acts as if one believes in stories one does not believe’ (MS 44). The imitation of action distinguishes art from the ‘flatness’ of images in the ethical regime, placing value primarily in the ‘depth’ of the represented content. A ramification of this for spectatorship, as we will see, is that the efficacy of an artwork is predicated on the transmission of its action to the audience.

The second principle refers to the requirements of genre, as found in the Poetics’ differentiation of comedy and tragedy. As Rancière notes, it is not enough for a fiction to announce itself as such – it must also conform to a genre. What defines a genre, however, is not a set of formal rules but the nature of what is represented, the object of the fiction. Once again it was Aristotle who set forth the principle in the first books of the Poetics: The genre of a poem – epic or satire, tragedy or comedy – is above all linked to the nature of what it represents.

(MS 45)
The object of imitation – high or low action – in turn determines the genre of the artwork. In the Poetics, this is primarily evident in the division of tragedy and comedy but it extends to other art forms. In Chapter 2, Aristotle mentions similar genre divisions between the painters Pauson and Polygnotus, and music produced on the lyre and that produced on the pipes (or ‘aulos’). More widely, this extends into a plethora of genre-rules. According to Deranty:

[t]he subject of the story dictates the genre of the art work: noble characters performing actions of “magnitude” (gods, heroes, kings, noble souls) will have to be represented in the noble genres of tragedy in the theatre, historical painting and official portraits in painting, and so on. Low characters (folk people, sinners) will be represented in comedy and satire, and in the painting of everyday life.

(122)

The rules of genre therefore produce a distribution of the sensible that determines in advance the forms of visibility afforded to specific actions and characters. By contrast, a key feature of the aesthetic regime is the departure from these rules so that ‘there is no demand that the artwork be in any sense “appropriate” to its subject, if indeed a “subject” can be identified at all’ (Davis Jacques Rancière, 136).

The requirements of genre lead to the third principle, ‘decorum’ (‘convenance’), in which the poet ‘must give his characters actions and discourses appropriate to their nature – and thus also appropriate to the poem’s genre’ (MS
This principle is founded on verisimilitude with criteria such as human emotions, character types according to canonical texts, the moral judgement and taste of a particular audience and period, and actions that are appropriate to a given genre (MS 46). Rancière argues that the principle of decorum underpins the representative regime within the French neoclassical period, in which '[t]he problem is not one of obeying rules but of discerning modes of suitability. The goal of fiction is to please' (MS 45). The principle of decorum therefore points to wider concerns of canonicity and the artistic tastes of society. As Deranty states of the principle, ‘although the work of art has been extracted from other forms of social activity, it has to obey strict norms defined by what is proper and what is improper in tight relation to a hierarchical scale’ (123). The principles of genre and decorum therefore dictate wider notions of artistic success. As I will outline in my discussion of the Poetics in the next sections of this chapter, the principles form what I call a ‘chain of propriety’, in which the character of the poet, the action imitated, the genre, the characters depicted, the effect produced, and the kind of audience are connected by hierarchical rules of suitability. Politics 8 enacts a similar process whereby ideal spectatorship depends on a series of stipulations separating educated citizens from vulgar labourers. These findings show that the conceptual framework of the representative regime can be expanded to account for spectatorship; the ‘noble’ actions represented in tragedy call for ‘noble’ viewers whose education obeys hierarchical divisions of labour.

The principle of decorum implies a certain kind of spectator capable of making judgements about an artwork’s propriety – one who feels the appropriate construction of the work as aesthetic pleasure (MS 46). In the case of Corneille and Racine, Rancière argues that these playwrights were capable of
true judgement of their own plays based on their ‘kinship’ with their characters: ‘both the great authors and their characters are men of glory, men of beautiful and active speech’ (MS 47). The ideal spectators capable of judging such artworks are therefore ‘men who act and who act through speech’ whose business is ‘to command or to convince, to exhort or deliberate, to teach or to please’ (MS 47). The representative regime presupposes equality between author, character, and spectator – an equivalence we will see in Aristotle's concern with the vulgarity of spectators in Chapter 26 of the Poetics. Here Aristotle compares epic and tragedy in terms of vulgarity; the genre ‘that is addressed to a higher type of listener is less vulgar’; therefore ‘an art that imitates anything and everything is vulgar’ (73; 1461b). In order to judge the appropriateness of the artwork, the audience must be comprised of those whose knowledge of good and proper actions and of fine speech provides them with the immediate pleasure felt at decorous representation. The demarcation between good and bad art, then, in turn becomes the demarcation between good and bad spectator. This is a key feature of representative spectatorship. As I argue in the next chapter, Aristotle’s guidelines for musical education in Politics 8 have the end result of producing a spectator able to distinguish between genres and respond accordingly. The representative regime’s hierarchical stipulations of art clearly have implications for spectatorship that warrant further investigation.

The privileging of active speech points to the fourth and final principle of the representative regime, ‘presence’, in which representation is anchored in the ideal of the speech act. Here ‘presence’ is ‘the equivalence between the act of representation and the affirmation of speech as action’, which ‘identifies the
fictional representation of actions with a staging of the act of speech’ (MS 48). As Deranty writes,

[the ideal case that regulates the whole system is one in which there is adequation of an ideal kind between author, character and audience: the artist’s superior spirit allows him to depict the speech and actions of noble characters for an audience of educated and tasteful people. All along, the norm is that of the power of speech and the speech of power: the audience composed ideally of powerful men, whose power is demonstrated in the efficacy of their own speech in real life, marvels at the power with which an author has represented a powerful speech in the fictional world.

(‘Regimes of the Arts’ 123)

Representation is imbued with the power of speech to do, act, or influence. Just as the ethical regime takes the direct participation of the choreographic community as its ideal, the representative regime is anchored in the speech of action. This does not violate the first principle’s affirmation of fictional autonomy; rather, it forms a ‘double economy’ in which fiction’s effect depends on the presence of speech (MS 48). Not only is action the ‘object’ of mimesis, but also the efficacy of the artwork is predicated on the transmission of this action to the audience. Art, in the representative regime, must act.

However, the primacy of speech within the representative regime results in a limitation on the nature of what can be represented. As Rancière writes in The Future of the Image, ‘the essence of speech is to make seen, to order the visible by
deploying a quasi-visibility’: speech has the power to ‘summon before our eyes’, making visible what is distant or invisible, such as ‘the inner springs motivating characters and events’ (FI 113). Yet speech must operate by limiting the realm of the visible in order to maintain the ideal of speech. Rancière discusses Corneille’s difficulties in rewriting Sophocles’ Oedipus for the French stage; for Corneille, Sophocles’ version suffered from an excess of spectacle because of the depiction of Oedipus’ gouged eyes. As Rancière argues, for Corneille ‘Oedipus’ blinded eyes are not merely a disgusting spectacle for the ladies. They represent the brutal imposition in the field of vision of something that exceeds the subordination of the visible to the making-visible of speech’ (FI 113). By exceeding the power of speech to signify, the gouged eyes call into question the very subordination of visibility: such sights (for Corneille at least) are spectacles to be kept onstage. Within the representative regime, spectacle does not refer to all forms of mimesis-as-mediation, only those elements of the visible that usurp the power of speech to make known. Spectacle, therefore, is the excessive nature of the visible that transgresses the primacy of speech.

The relationship between visibility and speech produces an aesthetic ‘depth’ that further limits the political operations of art and has implications for spectatorship. As discussed in the previous chapter, Plato’s attack on art is prompted in part by the flatness of images, in which ‘[t]he mute surface of depicted signs stands in opposition to the act of “living” speech, which is guided by the speaker towards the appropriate addressee’ (PA 15). In contrast, the primacy of speech within the representative regime functions to produce aesthetic depth. Writing of visual art, Rancière states that the
reproduction of optical depth [in painting] was linked to the privilege accorded to the *story*. In the Renaissance, the reproduction of three-dimensional space was involved in the valorization of painting and the assertion of its ability to capture an act of living speech, the decisive moment of action and meaning. In opposition to the Platonic degradation of *mimēsis*, the classical poetics of representation wanted to endow the ‘flat surface’ with speech or with a ‘scene’ of life, with a specific depth such as the manifestation of an action, the expression of an interiority, or the transmission of a meaning. Classical poetics established a relationship of correspondence at a distance between speech and painting, between the sayable and the visible, which gave ‘imitation’ its own specific space.

*(PA 16; orig. emphasis)*

In the representative regime, art is valued primarily for what it ‘says’: the story it tells, the action it represents and the *logos* it transmits. While Rancière is here writing in the context of painting, the relationship extends beyond the visual arts. In locating the substance of the artwork in its content to the detriment of surface, aesthetic depth produces a distinction between forms of spectatorship: ‘good’ spectatorship participates in the *logos* of the artwork, while ‘bad’ spectatorship merely revels in the pleasurable flatness of surface. The difference between the two produces a distribution of the sensible whereby viewing fails to participate in aesthetic depth, while ideal spectatorship exercises capacities that are ‘more than’ viewing.
Investigation of the representative regime of art with the key problematic of the spectator paradox in mind suggests important outcomes for Rancière’s engagement with spectatorship. The primacy of action and the requirements of genre and decorum prefigure a form of spectatorship predicated on both participation within the ‘action’ of the artwork and the capacity for judgement of a work’s efficacy through rules of genre. In my examination of the *Poetics* in the next two sections, I argue that the requirements of the regime also foreground the act of artistic composition; it is the poet’s ‘good intelligence’, which achieves artistic success, that is transmitted to the spectator capable of recognizing it as such. According to Aristotle, such composition is primarily concerned with the shaping of adequately realised and unified plots. As we shall see, the *Poetics* therefore subordinates the material and visual elements of performance to the primacy of speech, producing an ‘anti-optical’ ideal of spectatorship.

### 2.3 The Poetics: An Overview

Examination of the *Poetics* enables a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of spectatorship within the representative regime. In undertaking an overview of the *Poetics*, I outline Aristotle’s argumentative concerns, and identify key elements pertinent to my exegetical analysis of the text’s anti-optical tendencies.

Aristotle begins the *Poetics* by establishing its aim and scope:
The art of poetic composition in general and its various species, the function and effect of each of them; how the plots should be constructed if the composition is to be an artistic success; how many other component elements are involved in the process, and of what kind; and similarly all the other questions that fall under this same branch of inquiry – these are the problems we shall discuss; let us begin in the right and natural way, with basic principles.

(Trans. Else 1967, 15; 1447a)

The Poetics thus begins by examining poetry ‘in general’, and ends in Chapter 26’s evaluative comparison of two of its ‘species’, epic and tragedy. The opening passage foregrounds Aristotle’s combination of descriptive and prescriptive argumentation, as evident later in the treatise in the examination of the genres and normative prescriptions for artistic success. ‘Artistic success’ is here signalled by the Greek word ‘kalōs’, meaning ‘beautiful, fair, good’, but also in a moral sense of ‘beautiful, noble’ (‘καλός’, def. A.II, A.III). This word appears twenty-one times in the Poetics in either an aesthetic or a normative sense (Porter Origins of Aesthetic Thought 98-99). Aristotle’s repeated reference to ‘fineness’ is important for his discussion of art. As Andrew Ford argues, the Poetics’ description of the principles by which a poem is pronounced beautiful (‘kalon’) is linked to Aristotle’s description of the educated citizen in the Politics (Origins of Criticism, 287-88). The educated citizen functions as a critic or

10 According to Porter, ‘only seven or (doubtfully) eight of these occurrences have a narrowly aesthetic meaning, as opposed to their being used in a normative sense’ (Origins of Aesthetic Thought 99).
‘kritikos’, able to discern and judge musical performance (Ford 288). Aristotle’s description of poetry therefore functions as a means by which to separate ‘good’ art from ‘bad’. Good art is demarcated as the result of the ‘good activity’ of poetic composition, or the poet’s ability to successfully visualise and arrange plots. Bad art is a failure of composition, in which poets attempt to imitate ‘anything and everything’ (72-3; 1461b).

The normative operations of the Poetics are further evident in its focus on tragedy as a particular instance of poetry. By ending the Poetics with a statement of tragedy’s superiority over epic (it ‘attains [its] purpose better’) (75; 1462b), Aristotle appears to suggest that tragedy is the most refined or developed poetic genre. The suggestion is further compounded by the focus on the elements and plot-types of tragedy. As Porter states, it appears that “‘tragedy’ is covertly doing double duty for literature in its essential and perfected form for Aristotle: for tragedy culminates the progression of literary history from epic, and it surpasses every other genre in poetic mimesis’ (Origins of Aesthetic Thought 96). In discussing tragedy, Aristotle can therefore develop a theory of poetry in its most concentrated form. In the identification of tragedy as the most ‘perfected’ form of poetry, we can see the hierarchical nature of genre for Aristotle; tragedy provides a higher-than-common experience to those few able to experience it as such.

Aristotle’s discussion of mimesis throughout the early chapters of the Poetics defines art and divides it by genre. Various artistic productions such as tragedy, epic, comedy, music (1447a), and painting (1448a) are grouped as artistic according to their mimetic nature. Aristotle’s division of mimetic representation into means (media), objects, and methods allows for further
differentiation. This is evident in Chapter 2’s statement that all mimetic arts are imitations of ‘men in action’, which ‘must necessarily be worthwhile or worthless people’ (17; 1448a). Importantly, this distinction applies across different media: Aristotle gives as an example the painters Polygnotus and Pauson, who depicted superior and inferior people respectively, and additionally an example from music that distinguishes between lyre and flute playing. Aristotle concludes the section by stating that ‘the difference between tragedy and comedy coincides exactly with the master-difference: namely the one tends to imitate people better, the other one people worse, than the average’ (18; 1448a). Mimesis therefore functions as a tool to group and differentiate arts and genres through the depiction of high or low actions and people. The result is that judgement of an artwork’s ‘fineness’ is primarily concerned with the efficacy of its depiction of such action.

The Chapters 1 to 3 of the Poetics demonstrate that mimesis provides art with an individuating depth in contrast to the flatness and homogeneity of Platonic images. As Halliwell notes, an important aspect of Aristotle’s conception of mimesis is the notion of technē (‘art, skill, craft in workmanship, cunning of hand’) (LSJ ‘téchnē,’ def. A). Technē, as understood by Aristotle, brings with it a fuller sense of the purposeful craftsmanship involved in an artwork, and ‘represented a vital part of the ground of man’s practical and inventive intelligence, as opposed to the forces of nature’ (Aristotle’s Poetics 45). While the technai (arts) are man-made, they share a common teleology with nature in that

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11 Aristotle’s mention of ‘flute-playing’ here refers to the aulos, a twin reed instrument. In the Politics’ description of musical education, Aristotle identifies the aulos with vulgar music (469; 8.6)
12 Technē is also defined as ‘an art or craft, i.e. a set of rules, system or regular method of making or doing . . . whether of the useful arts, or of the fine arts’ (‘téchnē,’ def. A.III).
‘both have a similar tendency to aim at the best, to effect the finest or most successful organization of their material’ (48). Halliwell further notes that Aristotle makes frequent use of the poiēsis word-group, meaning to ‘make’ or ‘produce’, which is closely related to the technē word-group (56). Exactly what the poet constructs here is important – at 1451b, Aristotle states that a poet should not make verses but plots, or ‘unified representations of human action’ (Halliwell, Aristotle’s Poetics 57). The effect is the shedding of materiality: ‘what the poet ‘makes’ or produces is not a tangible object, but a mimetic construct in language (and other media) to be apprehended by the mind’ (Halliwell Aristotle’s Poetics, 57). The poet, for Aristotle, brings skill and craftsmanship to bear on what is essentially an abstract construction, depicting the vital energies of action at the expense of the materiality of image. Poetry and other arts therefore attain their unity, proportion and fineness through the ‘good craft’ of the artist, whose creative intelligence gives form to the representation. To experience the artwork is to experience, participate in or share in this good activity.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Aristotle turns to the origin of poetry and the evolution of genres. Aristotle locates the origin of poetry in humans’ natural capacity for imitation, specifying that ‘man differs from other animals in that he is the most imitative and learns his first lessons through imitation’ (20; 1448b). The grounding of mimesis in human nature reflects Aristotle’s grounding of politics in the human capacity for speech in Politics 1.2. The capacity for imitation, as Aristotle’s use of the terminology of poiēsis and technē indicates, is a marker of creative human intelligence. As Aristotle further argues, human propensity for imitation is evidenced in ‘the pleasure that all men take in works of imitation’
Aristotle cites as proof the pleasure that is felt even at disgusting or horrifying representations:

[t]here are things which we see with pain so far as they themselves are concerned but whose images, even when executed in very great detail, we view with pleasure. Such is the case for example with renderings of the least favoured animals, or of cadavers.

(20; 1448b)

This pleasure further demonstrates Aristotle’s departure from the Platonic criteria of ethical effect. For Plato, images mediate, and their flatness interrupts the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. For Aristotle, however, images are not only purposefully crafted but the process of composition has the power to transform distasteful scenes into objects of pleasure. The pleasure felt is because ‘in the process of viewing they [observers] find themselves learning’ through recognition of the object (20; 1448b). Even if the object is unfamiliar, observers will take pleasure ‘through its [the artwork’s] workmanship or colour or something else of that sort’ (21; 1448b). When read alongside Halliwell’s discussion of technē, this evidences a particular emphasis on the ‘good activity’ of poetic composition and its reception. Art, in Aristotle’s formulation, is the purposeful and crafted ordering of the aesthetic object; by implication, spectatorship consists in learning from the recognition of the object depicted, or simply the pleasure of the artwork’s construction. To put it another way, good spectatorship requires an intelligence capable of recognizing artistic success.
After grounding imitation in human nature, Aristotle states that those who were ‘most gifted’ in imitation brought poetry into existence through improvisations. These then split into those who imitated ‘noble’ (‘*kalas*, related to ‘*kalōs*’) actions and noble people, and those ‘cheaper’ persons who imitated the actions of the ‘worthless’ (21; 1448b). The split delineates the origins of tragedy and comedy respectively, with Homer serving as a precursor to both. From these beginnings, tragedy ‘did expand gradually, each feature being further developed as it appeared; and after it had gone through a number of phases it stopped upon attaining its full natural growth’ (25; 1449b). Aristotle briefly discusses material concerns in the evolution of tragedy, such as the addition of actors and choruses. His teleology of poetic (tragic) development emphasises the attainment of a final state of perfection and is furthered by later normative prescriptions for the finest or most perfected tragic plot. In Chapter 5, Aristotle briefly discusses comedy, which he defines as

an imitation of persons who are inferior; not, however, going all the way to full villainy, but imitating the ugly, of which the ludicrous is one part. The ludicrous, that is, a failing or a piece of ugliness which causes no pain or destruction; thus, to go no farther, the comic mask is something ugly and distorted but painless.

(23-24; 1449a-b).

Even though comedy represents the ugly actions of inferior people, this need not affect the quality of the artwork. Instead, these actions are differentiated and
demarcated as such via the partitioning of genre. Aristotle specifies that the origin and development of comedy initially escaped notice ‘because it was not taken seriously’ (24; 1449b). The depiction of low actions and the ugly is not inherently bad, so long as it is conveyed through the appropriate genre. Composition, then, requires a poetic intelligence capable of grasping the divisions of genre and the related rules of decorum.

Chapters 6 to 18 discuss tragedy, primarily focusing on elements of plot, characters, and the emotional response of the audience to the dramatic representation. In Chapter 6, Aristotle gives a working definition of tragedy as the ‘mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions (‘Aristotle’s Poetics’ Trans. Halliwell 47,49; 1449b). The definition of catharsis has been a contentious part of the reception of the Poetics; Halliwell calls catharsis ‘arguably now the most famous/notorious, as well as enigmatic, concept in the entire history of Western poetics’ (Ecstasy and Truth 222). The problematic nature of catharsis for readers of the Poetics stems from its apparent importance to the definition of tragedy, coupled with Aristotle’s silence on its particular meaning. As we shall see in the next chapter, in Politics 8

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13 Such is the contested nature of this passage that the translation of the word ‘catharsis’ implies vastly different interpretive frameworks. Accordingly, I have cited Halliwell’s 1995 translation. Else’s 1967 translation, which I have used elsewhere, translates the last clause as ‘through a course of pity and fear completing the purification of tragic acts which have those emotional characteristics’ (26). This is based on his ‘structural’ catharsis interpretation outlined in Aristotle’s Poetics: The Argument (see 221-232, especially 228-231).

14 Despite the vast literature on catharsis, attempts to arrive at Aristotle’s meaning continue unabated. As recently as 2012, Kallendorf and Craig Kallendorf argue that ‘[t]his debate would clearly benefit from a new line of reasoning to supplement the traditional explanations’ (297). Their interpretation, against the grain of most modern attempts, is religious in nature. Alternatively, Malcolm Heath (2014) interprets catharsis via Aristotle’s writing on musical catharsis in Politics 8, concluding that it functions as a ‘pleasurable relief from the emotional engagement with distressing representations (122).
Aristotle discusses catharsis as a form of emotional response to music, which he contrasts to music’s educative use.

While the meaning or definition of catharsis is not a concern of this thesis, the centrality of the concept to the reception of the Poetics is instructive. As Ford argues, ‘[d]efining the special pleasure that is katharsis has been so controversial in subsequent Western literary theory because it raises fundamental issues in the psychology and social use of art’ (‘Katharsis: the Ancient Problem’ 110). Examination of the Poetics via the representative regime offers a possible explanation of the contentions that surround catharsis: within the representative regime, art must ‘act’, inducing within the spectator an activity, whether moral, didactic, religious, emotional, pathological, intellectual, homeopathic etc. Critics and inheritors of Aristotelian catharsis – such as Brecht, Boal and Artaud – therefore seek to amend or extend the effect or action produced by the artwork.\(^{15}\)

Following the definition of tragedy, Aristotle lists its six elements (‘plot, characters, verbal expression, thought, visual adornment [opsis], and song-composition’), before ranking them according to importance (26; 1450a). Most important is plot, or the ‘structuring of the incidents’, which Aristotle states ‘is the goal of tragedy, and the goal is the greatest thing of all’ (27; 1450a). Second is character, because ‘a tragedy cannot exist without a plot, but it can without characters’ (27; 1450a). Plot holds importance over character because elements of plot, such as reversal and recognition, are ‘the most powerful means tragedy has for swaying our feelings’ (28; 1450a). Aristotle compares this to painting; a

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\(^{15}\) As Rancière states of contemporary ‘critical’ art: ‘[w]e may no longer believe that exhibiting virtues and vices on stage can improve human behaviour, but we continue to act as if reproducing a commercial idol in resin will engender resistance against the “spectacle”’ (Ds 136). In seeking to provoke a response, such art depends upon a staging of its own supposed efficacy by ‘conferring on the artwork the power of the effects that it is supposed to elicit on the behaviour of the spectators’ (136).
painting of random yet beautiful colours ‘will not give as much pleasure as a black-and-white outline picture’ (28; 1450b). The third element is ‘thought’, or the ‘ability to state the issues and appropriate points pertaining to a given topic’, which Aristotle relates to the practices of rhetoric (28-9; 1450b). Fourth is verbal expression, through which the element of thought is conveyed. The remaining two elements are part of the ‘sensuous attractions’ of tragedy, and of these Aristotle places song composition (fifth) above visual adornment (sixth).

Aristotle’s ranking of these elements further demonstrates notions of aesthetic depth in the regime; tragedy is the structuring of action, rather than the surface elements of ‘sensuous attraction.’

Given the importance of plot, Aristotle undertakes considerable discussion of its elements in Chapters 7 to 11, focusing on proportion (1450b), unity, and probability (1451b). Tragedy should be constructed of appropriate magnitude so that it can ‘be taken in a single view’, for ‘beauty depends on size and order’ (30; 1450b). Chapter 8 discusses unity of plot, and Aristotle stresses that having a single character is no guarantee of a ‘single action’ (31; 1451a). This leads to a stipulation concerning mimetic unity: ‘[a] poetic imitation, then, ought to be unified in the same way as a single imitation in any other mimetic field, by having a single object’ (32; 1451a). Chapter 9 contains a discussion of plot probability, in which the mimetic object is freed from strict truth-criteria. The poet can talk of that ‘which is likely to happen’; it is the historian’s job to report on events that have actually occurred (32; 1451b). As a result, ‘poetry is a more philosophical business than history; for poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars’ (33; 1451b). The poetic ‘universals’ are here based on probability of what actions are likely and appropriate according to a particular
character. This stipulation further works to afford an ontological autonomy to art in line with Chapter 4’s statement on the depiction of the disgusting.

Aristotle then distinguishes between lesser (‘simple’) and most perfected (‘complex’) plots. The worst kind of simple plot is the episodic, consisting of a series of scenes with little causal connection (1452a). In contrast, the tragic effect produced by pity and fear is felt best in plots that change unexpectedly yet following probability and necessity (34; 1451b). Chapter 10 defines complex plots as those in which the plot reversal occurs along with a character’s recognition (‘anagnorisis’) and reversal of fortune (‘peripeteia’) (1452a), leading to events of suffering (‘pathos’) (1452b). The most successful interweaving of these elements in the complex plot produces the most tragic effect, which in Chapter 11 Aristotle states is evident in the plot of Sophocles’ Oedipus. The differentiation between simple and complex plots, or good and bad tragedy, is therefore primarily a matter of the arrangement and construction of action, calculated to produce the greatest effect upon audiences.

Chapters 12 to 16 primarily focus on the emotional effect of tragedy. In Chapter 13, Aristotle argues that the complex plot is finest because it elicits the emotions of pity and fear in the audience, which in turn depends on the particular treatment of the actions of characters (1452b). Aristotle specifies that virtuous characters should not suffer, and the wicked should not be rewarded, nor overly punished. Instead, pity is felt ‘towards the man who does not deserve his misfortune’, while fear is felt ‘towards one who is like the rest of mankind’; thus the best character is one of middling virtuosity (38; 1453a). It is the ability

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16 Aristotle’s statement on universals appears to neatly refute some of Plato’s accusations against art based on the metaphysical truth-value of representations. Yet as Else (1957, 305), Woodruff (82), and Halliwell (2002, 193-99) argue, such reading is misleading – the ‘universals’ are not metaphysical but instead refer to the actions of characters.
of complex plots to produce pity and fear that marks the ‘finest tragedies’ (‘*to kalon*) (39; 1453a). Plot endings that reward the good and punish the bad are called ‘double’, and are more suited to comedy (1453a). Hence the type of action (of high or low people) and the form of its representation (through plot endings) distinguish the boundaries between genres. The measure of an artwork’s success is calculated according to the specific emotional effect it produces in the audience.

Chapter 14 continues the discussion of pity and fear in tragedy, focusing on the means by which these emotions are produced. Here Aristotle makes a distinction of great importance for my discussion of spectatorship in the next section: it is possible for pity and fear to be produced from the appearance (*opseös/opsis*) of the actors themselves, or from the plot structure, with the latter case being the better mark of poetic skill (40; 1453b). Aristotle further states that it is possible for the plot to be structured so as to produce these emotions without any visual effect at all, such as would happen if one were only to hear the ‘events unroll’, such as with the plot of *Oedipus* read to one (40; 1453b). As we shall see in a moment, this passage is crucial to my arguments because it exemplifies the exclusion of material performance that is evident throughout the treatise, seen via the subordination of visual elements (*opsis*) to action. Aristotle also censures those who attempt to achieve a ‘monstrous’ effect by using masks and costumes, ‘for one should not seek any and every pleasure from tragedy, but the one that is appropriate to it’ (40). To drive the point home, Aristotle then states that pity and fear must therefore ‘be built into the constituent events’ (40; 1453b). Aristotle’s subordination of *opsis* to action forms a key aspect of
Rancière’s discussion of the representative regime. However, as I address in the
next section, it also has significant implications for the consideration of
spectatorship. I argue that Aristotle’s expulsion of the materiality of performance
from his treatise on tragedy has an anti-optical effect, and suggest that Aristotle’s
motivation is to separate the experience of tragedy from theatres comprised of
the 'anybody whoever'. This suggests that Aristotle’s stipulations on plot
composition have the effect of policing audiences.

Aristotle turns to technical advice for poets in chapters 17 to 22, including
composition and grammar elements. Aristotle’s advice on composition exhibits a
concern with visualisation, artistic consistency, and authenticity. Aristotle
stipulates that poets should properly visualise events when composing their
plays, citing the case of Carcinus, whose failure to visualise the plot led to the
audience’s dissatisfaction (1455a). The poet should therefore seek to ‘work the
appropriate figures and forms of speech into the text’ via a kind of emotional
authenticity, ‘[f]or people in the grip of the passions are most persuasive because
they share the same natural tendencies’ (48; 1455a). According to Halliwell,
Aristotle implies that poets should act out the play in order to achieve the right
emotional authenticity (Aristotle ‘Poetics’ trans. Halliwell 89, footnote c). The
poet should then outline the plot structure in abstract before adding particular
scenes in order to gain ‘a general view of the play’ (trans. Else 1967 48; 1455b).
Aristotle is concerned here with the appropriate crafting and transmission of the
artwork to the audience in line with his emphasis on technē. In contrast to the

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17 As Rancière writes in Aisthesis, action for Aristotle is the ‘sensible tissue’ through which
tragedy manifests itself, providing the ‘causal machinery’ that ‘must make the spectator shudder’.
However, ‘it is not different from the one that makes the reader shudder’ (116).
18 Halliwell notes that the original Greek indicates that the audience 'hisst' the actors offstage
(Aristotle, ‘Poetics’ 88, footnote b).
ethical regime – in which the mediation of image must be abolished – the *Poetics*
is concerned foremost with the distinction between good and bad art, anchored
in the intelligence and 'good activity' of skilled poetic composition. As I will
discuss in the next section, this 'good activity' depends upon the poet's 'mind’s
eye', through which the artwork can be viewed in the abstract. This remains the
clearest reference to 'viewing' within the *Poetics*, and associates it with the
construction and transmission of action.

Chapters 23 to 26 of the *Poetics* are about epic, which must (like tragedy)
be of appropriate structure and proportion if they are to 'produce the right
pleasure', meaning that the poet must depict the proper events (61; 1459a). In
discussing the mimetic nature of epic, Aristotle states that the poet, like other
imitators such as painters, must imitate what was, what is, or what ought to be
(68; 1460b). Yet poetry, as an art in its own right, does not have the same
'standards of correctness' as other arts, such as politics (67; 1460b). Poetry's
standards of correctness are instead aesthetic: poetry must be judged on criteria
of artistic success rather than representational accuracy. Hence, some
inaccuracies may be permitted if they make the artwork more 'emotionally
shattering' (68; 1460b). Halliwell argues that this amounts to a 'principle of
artistic or aesthetic contextualism', in which the artistic merits are judged in light
of the larger 'economy of the poem' (*Ecstasy and Truth* 218). Such contextualism,
in turn, should be seen as part of the chapter's attempt to 'defend poetry against
various kinds of inappropriate criticism and fault-finding' by proposing criteria
of judgement appropriate to poetry itself (218). That poetry can have its own
standards of correctness allows for the wider project of the *Poetics* itself: the
elucidation of a set of principles by which a poem may be considered an ‘artistic success’ (1447a).

The final chapter of the Poetics, Chapter 26, contains important argumentation I will further examine in the next section. I claim that Chapter 26 evidences a connection between Aristotle’s anti-optical procedure and hierarchies of audience that points to the political nature of Aristotle’s division between spectating and viewing. Aristotle compares tragedy and epic to determine which is the superior genre. The main concern is the relative vulgarity of each genre: ‘[f]or, as some say, the less vulgar genre is superior, and the one that is addressed to a higher type of listener is less vulgar, it would clearly follow that an art which imitates anything and everything is vulgar’ (72-3; 1461b).

Aristotle addresses the accusation that tragedy is more vulgar because of actors who over exaggerate and the lower class of its audience members. In rejecting the accusation, Aristotle outlines a number of counter-arguments that separate tragedy from the vulgarity of its performance origins and assert its unified nature. Here, Aristotle states that ‘tragedy can do its work without as well as with movement. . . . The quality of a play is evident from reading alone’ (74; 1462a). Aristotle’s separation of the experience of a play’s quality from material performance has the effect of constructing a form of spectatorship separate from the theatre. With the separation of the essence of tragedy from vulgar theatre audiences, the Poetics concludes with the assertion that tragedy is the superior genre.

Aristotle’s separation of tragedy from vulgar audiences is an example of the representative principles of ‘decorum’ and ‘genre’. His connection of this vulgarity to the imitation of ‘anything and everything’ locates the failure of genre
in the failure of the poet to properly visualise and compose plots. The *Poetics’* description of art therefore dictates what I call a ‘chain of propriety’ that consists of a series of hierarchical and stratified genre stipulations which determine the artistic success of a composition. Good poetry originates in the proper visualisation and authentic composition (1455a-b) of poets of either high or low status (1448b), who imitate noble or vulgar actions (1449a-b) of high or low characters, resulting in the genres of tragedy or comedy (1448a). In the instance of tragedy, ‘good’ compositions must be of appropriate magnitude (1449b) and conveyed in the proper form (the complex plot, 1459a) to best produce the specific emotions of pity and fear (1452b). Finally, in Chapter 26, ‘good’ tragedy is recognized as such by the appropriate (non-vulgar) audience.

To preserve the hierarchical stratifications of genre and propriety, it is clear that the ‘proper’ audience of tragedy cannot be the lower classes. Yet it is significant that Aristotle’s separation of tragedy from such audiences coincides with his splitting of its effect from material performance; for Aristotle, ‘bad’ art is that which fails to make the proper distinction, thus appealing to the ‘wrong’ spectators. Like the ethical regime, for the representative regime of art the viewership of the ‘anybody whoever’ is a threat that must be contained. The threat is not simply that of ‘looking’ but of apprehension of the experience proper to artworks. For Aristotle to preserve the distinctions between noble and vulgar actions, good and bad art, and high and low audiences, spectating must consist of something ‘more than’ viewing. This, I argue, is the wider motivation underpinning Aristotle’s anti-optical procedure, to which I now turn.
2.4 Aristotle’s Anti-Optics

As previously discussed, Rancière identifies in the representative regime a number of features that determine the ‘visibility’ of artefacts as artistic. An effect of this is the subordination of the ‘visible’ to the ‘sayable’, or ‘opsis’ to action, which provides artworks with their aesthetic ‘depth’. I argue that the subordination, as evident in the Poetics’ expulsion of performance from the experience of tragedy, has important implications for spectatorship. Close examination of this process reveals an anti-optical conception of idealised spectatorship, as distinct from viewership. When read in light of the spectator paradox, the anti-optical procedure indicates the neutralisation of aspects of spectatorship that are problematic for the ethical regime. Aristotle’s splitting of spectatorship from viewership expels the ‘optical machinery’ that renders viewers passive. Further, the aesthetic depth identified by Rancière functions to ensure the pedagogical transmission of the artwork’s activity to the ‘proper’ audience, thus countering the supposed ‘ignorance’ of spectatorship. As I outline, Aristotle acknowledges performance both explicitly and implicitly, showing that he is not concerned to define what might be considered a purely ‘literary’ experience of tragedy. Instead, it is a case of determining what is considered ‘artistic’ within the representative regime, which for Aristotle is conclusively plot, or the abstract arrangement of action.

Throughout the Poetics, Aristotle exhibits a conflicted attitude to opsis and the wider elements of performance and the theatre. While the seven direct references to opsis throughout the treatise appear to refer to the actors’ appearance rather than stage setting (Halliwell Aristotle’s Poetics, 338-9), Aristotle’s subordination, exclusion, and restriction of visual elements are
compounded by a wider denigration of the theatre as an institution. Yet this attitude contrasts to Aristotle’s implicit acknowledgement of the requirements of the stage and performance for the composition of tragedy. Halliwell argues that Aristotle’s framework ‘is not as straightforwardly anti-theatrical as is sometimes alleged’ but that ‘there is an ineliminable equivocation in his statements on the importance of performance for the realisation of tragedy’s effects’ (*Aristotle’s Poetics* 342). Halliwell cites the growing separation of text and performance in Greek culture, and the demands of Aristotle’s own philosophical method as further explanations for his separation of poetry from its theatre context (*Aristotle’s Poetics* 343). Yet the very separation, in principle, of the effect of tragedy from its material performance indicates an anti-optical procedure. In short, Aristotle separates drama from forms of spectacle.

Aristotle does acknowledge performance, suggesting that his treatment of tragedy is not entirely ‘literary’. The first instance is in his discussion of the evolution of tragedy in Chapter 4: the addition of actors, shortening of choral pieces, and primacy of dialogue are all cited as innovations of Aeschylus’ dramatic practice (1449a). Chapter 5’s discussion of comedy also mentions stage masks and the granting of a chorus to comic poets, while stating that the origin of prologues, masks and troupes of actors in comedy is unknown (1449b). Thus the material concerns of performance figure in the origins and evolution of tragedy and comedy. However, his earlier statement that the genres ‘did expand gradually, each feature being further developed’ until stopping ‘upon attaining its full natural growth’ (22; 1449a) makes it unclear how integral these features are to their final forms as Aristotle imagines them. In Chapter 6’s discussion of the definition and elements of tragedy, Aristotle specifies that some parts of
plays are spoken, and others sung. He then states: ‘since they perform the imitation through action (by acting it), the adornment of their visual appearance ['opsis'] will perforce constitute some part of the making of tragedy’ along with song-composition and verbal expression (26; 1449b). Here Aristotle connects the object of mimesis – action – to performance, and attends to the material concerns of the actors themselves. This is reinforced a few lines later in the statement that tragedy ‘is an imitation of an action and is enacted by certain people who are performing the action' (26; 1449b, my emphasis). In these instances, Aristotle takes into consideration the material evolution of drama, while also connecting its object (action) to its media (acting/performance).

Aristotle further acknowledges performance through his attention to the limits and requirements of the stage. In discussing the length and proportions of tragedy (of great importance, as ‘beauty depends on size and order’ (30; 1450b)), Aristotle considers the material requirements of the tragic festival. One limitation is ‘determined by the tragic competitions and the ordinary span of attention’; in competitions with many tragedies competing, the water-clock would serve as a limit (31; 1451a). While Aristotle subsequently turns from this aspect to propose a time-limit abstractly determined by plot (which I revisit below), he demonstrates an implicit recognition of the materiality of performance within the context of the tragic competitions. Another stage limitation is discussed in Chapter 24’s comparison between epic and tragedy, where Aristotle notes that tragedy cannot present multiple actions simultaneously because of the limitations of acting on stage (1459b). These instances appear to be directed towards properly determining the requirements of poetic composition.
In addition to the limitations of the stage, Aristotle takes into account the requirements and judgement of audiences. An example is the requirement that the length of a plot ‘be taken in in a single view’ (30; 1451a; and the previously mentioned ‘span of attention’). Additionally, Aristotle outlines a concern with the end of the production of pity and fear in the audience, such as Chapter 13’s attention to audience identification with the tragic protagonist. Aristotle also makes reference to audience judgement as evidence of the superiority of the ‘single’ plot: Euripides’ practice is correct in the way that has been shown. There is a very significant indication: on our stages and in the competitions, plays of this structure are accepted as the most tragic, if they are handled successfully, and Euripides, though he may not make his other arrangements effectively, still is felt by the audience to be the most tragic, at least, of the poets.

(39; 1453a, orig. emphasis)

The audience’s judgement, then, is cited as an indicator of the ‘tragic’. Aristotle again makes reference to the (abstract) audience in the next section’s discussion of pity and fear ‘as felt by the spectator’ (1453b 40). While Aristotle's focus is primarily on the craft of the poet, he does attend to the end-effect of the poetic process.

Aristotle further acknowledges performance in his discussion of poetic composition. In his advice that poets properly visualise their plots, Aristotle cites Carcinus’ failure to do so: ‘on the stage the play failed because the spectators
were offended by it’ (48; 1455a). Later, Aristotle makes a similar reference to audience reception as evidence for the error of attempting to dramatize entire epic episodes; such plays ‘either do not place in the competitions or fail to win’ (51; 1456a). And, again, at 1459b: ‘[i]t is repetitiveness, which so quickly bores the spectator, that causes tragedies to fail’ (64). Poets, therefore, should consider the sensitivities and tastes of their audiences if they wish to achieve artistic success.

Audiences are clearly part of the picture for Aristotle, both in the abstract and in particular anecdotal instances. Further, the references to acting and the limits of the stage show that tragedy is at least intended for performance. Yet the potted and piecemeal nature of such references in a text that devotes whole chapters to discussion of speech, components of grammar, and linguistic style, leaves the impression that performance is almost an afterthought. Despite mention of theatre origins, the limits of the stage, and audience taste, the Poetics enacts a systematic separation of the experience of tragedy (and poetry or art more generally) from performance. This is seen in the elevation of plot, the subordination of opsis, the expulsion of the materiality of performance, the isolation of an abstract notion of ‘spectating’, and the denigration of actors and audience, all of which effect the separation of the experience of tragedy from the physical space of the theatre and from the possibility of the gaze of ‘anybody whoever’.

Despite Aristotle’s inclusion of opsis as an element of tragedy, he appears to exclude it from his conception of tragedy’s essence. A clear example is Chapter 6’s ranking of opsis as the least essential element:
the visual adornment ['opsis'] of the dramatic persons can have a strong emotional effect but is the least artistic element, the least connected with the poetic art; in fact the force of tragedy can be felt even without benefit of public performance and actors, while for the production of the visual effect ['opseōn'] the property man's art is even more decisive than that of the poets.

(29; 1450b)

Although visual appearance can be emotionally powerful, it is the least connected with the art of poetry. Importantly, Aristotle adds that tragedy's effect can be felt without performance at all – a statement that appears to contradict his acknowledgement throughout the text of performance and the stage.

A further example of the exclusion of opsis is Chapter 14’s discussion of pity and fear:

[n]ow it is possible for the fearful and pathetic effect to come from the actors’ appearance ['opseōs'], but it is also possible for it to arise from the very structure of the events, and this is closer to the mark and characteristic of a better poet. Namely, the plot must be so structured, even without benefit of any visual effect ['opseōs'], that the one who is hearing the events unroll shudders with fear and feels pity at what happens: which is what one would experience on hearing the plot of the Oedipus. To set out to achieve this by means of the masks and costumes is less artistic, and requires technical support in the staging.
Again we see that *opsis* and the visual dimensions of tragedy are inessential to the production of the ideal aesthetic response in the spectator. And, further, in Chapter 26: ‘tragedy can do its work without as well as with movement, just as epic can. The quality of a play is evident from reading alone’; also, tragedy ‘has dramatic vividness in reading as well as in actual performance’ (74; 1462a).19 The ideal effect of tragedy – the production of pity and fear – is a product of the arrangement of plot-action. Plot, not performance, is where the ‘artistry’ of poetry is located.

By separating tragedy from *opsis*, Aristotle fundamentally reconfigures spectatorship. As Porter notes, in stating that emotional effect can be felt from simply hearing the plot of *Oedipus*, ‘Aristotle has substituted for “phenomenal viewing” a non-phenomenal, “theoretical viewing”. . . . In the place of vision, he substitutes the self-fulfilling “transparency” of a successfully constructed work of art’ (*Origins of Aesthetic Thought* 104; orig. emphasis). Tragedy’s content, for Aristotle, is plot-form, meaning that the experience of tragedy is abstract and removed from sensual materiality. This is evident in his early statement at 1450b on the importance of plot via the analogy of painting: ‘the most beautiful pigments smeared on at random will not give as much pleasure as a black-and-white outline’ (28). Ideal spectatorship is identified with the apprehension of the *logos* or depth of the artwork. In the terms of the spectator paradox, the spectator must be redeemed from her passivity and ignorance. Aristotle’s

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19 In a brief moment of material exuberance, Aristotle also states that tragedy has everything that epic has, but also includes music – ‘that source of the vividest of our pleasures’ (74; 1462a).
solution is to anchor art in the creative intelligence of the poet and the ‘good activity’ of successful composition; the spectator ‘shares’ in this good activity and therefore has a part in its *logos*.

The abstract or ‘theoretical’ viewing is primarily concerned with the unity, coherence and proportion of the artwork. An example is in Chapter 7 when Aristotle specifies that beauty (‘*to kalon*’) depends on ‘size and order’ so that the object ‘can be taken in a single view’ (31; 1450b-51a). Just as a beautiful animal cannot be too small or too large (which would prevent perception of order and unity), plots ‘should have length, but such that they are easy to remember’ (30-31; 1451a). As Porter argues, this passage places emphasis on the time required for viewing:

> the time of an aesthetic perception must *itself* be aesthetically perceptible (*aisthētos*). If a perceptual object requires no perceptible time to be taken in, the aesthetic perception as a whole, Aristotle says, will be marred. *Beauty*, in other words, *cannot be glimpsed*: it must be perceived *as such*, almost in a second-order fashion.

*(Origins of Aesthetic Thought 98; orig. emphasis)*

Apprehension of the beautiful is a process separate from viewing or ‘glimpsing’: it is predicated on time, which in turn is dictated by the proper proportions and construction of the artwork. In outlining the proper length, Aristotle references the limits of tragic competition before specifying that ‘the limit fixed by the very nature of the case’ is the size that allows for proper plot reversals (31; 1451a).
The artwork should therefore be so proportioned as to enable the effective transmission of the action to the spectator, who receives this proportion as the experience of beauty; beauty is a perception of the propriety and unity of construction of the artwork, to be felt by the spectator as the result of an evaluative response to its artistic success. The experience of beauty therefore requires spectators capable of distinguishing good art from bad.

The requirements of ideal spectatorship place a burden upon the poet. It is the poet's superior intelligence and grasp of the poetic art that imbues the artwork with its ideal effect. As Aristotle states in Chapter 16 of composition,

in constructing one's plots and working them out in language one should put them directly before one's eyes as much as possible. That way, seeing most vividly, as if he were actually getting close to the events as they happen, the poet can devise the appropriate 'business,' and discrepancies are least likely to escape his notice.

(47; 1455a)

Before adding the sensual material of language, the poet must visualise and sketch out the play's events 'as a method for gaining a general view of the play' (48; 1455b). This 'viewing' is intended to eliminate errors in composition that might occur on the stage (as in the example of Carcinus), yet these errors are elements of plot resulting from a failure to visualise the action (1455a). The strongest mention of viewing in the Poetics – as a vivid experience, 'getting close to the events' – is not related to spectating but to the poet's process of plot-composition (47; 1455a). By contrast, the catharsis-clause in Chapter 6, which is
taken by many readers to be the ideal effect of tragedy, and refers to the audience’s most heightened emotional response, makes no mention of viewing or vivid proximity. The poet’s inner eye serves as the wellspring of an action that may be felt as beautiful by those of adequate taste.

The separation of the artwork from material performance is further evident in Aristotle’s attacks on actors and audiences. This shows the limitation of artistic mediation, and is suggestive of the anti-democratic distrust of audiences I discuss in the next chapter. In distinguishing between simple and complex plots, Aristotle says of the lesser ‘episodic’ plots that such structures are composed by the bad poets because they are bad poets, but by the good poets because of the actors: in composing contest pieces for them, and stretching out the plot beyond its capacity, they are forced frequently to dislocate the sequence.

\[(1451b - 52a 34)\]

The complex plot is the marker of a better poet, but actors seeking to impress audiences with contest pieces can lead such poets astray.\(^{20}\)

This sentiment is echoed in Aristotle’s discussion of plot-endings, where he places the double plot (with separate outcomes for good and bad characters) below the single plot with an unhappy ending. Here, Aristotle states that the double plot is sometimes incorrectly taken to be best by some people: ‘\[i\]ts being

\[^{20}\text{There is some evidence that this occurred. As Robert Wallace argues, the fourth century saw an increase of improvisations in performed plays, leading to stipulations that the plays of the three tragedians should be written out to compare against the actors’ lines. Wallace writes: ‘[a]s with nineteenth-century Italian opera, which often provided to the diva a great aria during the first act lest she insert one from a different work . . . actors in Athens inserted famous lines or set speeches into stage dramas to win the cheers of the public.’ (108).}^\]
put first is due to the weakness of the audiences; for poets follow along, catering to their wishes’ (1453a 39). Certain audiences, then, encourage poets to pander to their tastes and compose tragedies in the incorrect manner. This particular statement is notable for the fact that it immediately follows Aristotle’s reference to audience taste as evidence of Euripides’ tragic ability. Audience judgement only seems reliable when it reflects Aristotle’s own; only audiences capable of good perception can be trusted. Later, in Chapter 24, Aristotle praises Homer for his narrative restraint; other poets lack such modesty, and ‘are on the stage contesting for the prize the whole time’ (1460a 65). While the statement may be a simple figure of speech, it reflects a significant prejudice against democratic crowd judgement. Such accusations of the corruption of actors and the weakness of audiences are indicative of Aristotle’s mistrust of performance and spectatorship; above all, audiences must be prevented from influencing the composition and construction of plays. Theatre audiences and actors cannot be trusted to determine artistic propriety and construction; only poets of appropriate ability can make such judgements.

Clues to the distribution underpinning Aristotle’s anti-optics can be found by returning to the final chapter of the Poetics. In comparing epic and tragedy, Aristotle states:

*[f]or if, as some say, the less vulgar genre is superior, and the one that is addressed to a higher type of listener is less vulgar, it would clearly follow that an art which imitates anything and everything is vulgar. Namely (they say) the actors engage in all kinds of ‘business’ on the assumption that the public will not catch what is
going on unless the actor exaggerates, and so they behave like the third-rate flute-players who twist and writhe when they are rendering a discuss throw or pull on the chorus leader when playing the Scylla.

(72-73; 1461b)

Vulgarity is the result of a genre that imitates ‘anything and everything’, amplified by the crude excess of actors who ham it up for the crowds, recalling the earlier vilification of actors. Importantly, the improper construction of the artwork appeals to improper audiences, while such audiences in turn can influence the performance via actors desperate to please. In the next chapter’s discussion of elite and mass audiences, we shall see that Plato holds similar concerns about the corrupting influence of spectators. According to the hypothetical argument Aristotle raises, epic ‘addresses a superior class of listeners, who have no need of the gestures and postures, while tragedy is for the groundlings’ (1462a 73). Thus within the Poetics the final concern is the hierarchy of artistic genres based on their appeal to types of spectators.

Aristotle outlines a series of rebuttals to the hypothetical accusation against tragedy: the accusation is against acting, not poetry; only ‘low’ characters need be censored (73; 1462a); tragedy can function without ‘movement’ (acting); ‘the quality of tragedy is evident from reading alone’ (74; 1462a); tragedy has music, which is pleasurable; tragedy is more concentrated, being shorter (74; 1462b), and finally tragedy ‘attains its purpose better than epic’ (75; 1462b). The result of Aristotle’s separation of tragedy from performance is the exclusion of vulgar audiences. The representative principles of genre and
decorum thus extend to include the audience itself. Aristotle’s anti-optics is more than a means by which to exclude the illiterate: it configures the experience of art as more than ‘mere’ viewing, and identifies it with the judgement or recognition of the artwork’s quality or fineness.

2.5 Conclusion

Close analysis of the Poetics in light of the representative regime and spectator paradox reveals the implications of Aristotle’s description of art for spectatorship. By further extending Rancière’s discussion of aesthetic depth and subordination of the visible to the sayable, we can see that Aristotle constructs an anti-optical ideal of spectatorship via the exclusion of material performance. Aristotle’s in-principle acknowledgement of the requirements of the stage and performance shows that he is not concerned with an entirely ‘literary’ notion of tragedy. Instead, the anti-optical nature of the experience of tragedy operates to limit and contain the mediation of theatrical image; what the audience receives is what the poet constructs through his or her creative intelligence and prudent arrangement of material. In the Poetics it is the poet, not the audience, whose viewing matters. Good art requires good spectators capable of judging it as such, as is clear in Chapter 26 when Aristotle severs the experience of ‘the quality of a play’ from vulgar audiences (74; 1462a).

Through an exegetical analysis of the Poetics, this chapter has identified a number of ways in which the conceptual framework of the representative regime of art can be extended to account for spectatorship. By anchoring good art in the intelligence of the poet and good spectatorship in the effective reception of the
abstract ‘action’ of plot, Aristotle redeems spectatorship from the ignorance and passivity of the spectator paradox. Aristotle's normative stipulations for artistic success appear to configure spectating as a form of judgement or evaluation, in which spectators recognize the artwork's propriety. As I outline in the next chapter, Aristotle's audience divisions in *Politics* 8 oppose ‘good’ spectatorship to ‘bad’ viewership and encode intellectual inequalities in the apprehension of art. My examination of *Politics* 8 reveals a distribution of the sensible that underpins spectatorship in the representative regime.
Chapter 3. Seeing Versus Looking: Politics 8 and Aristotle’s Split Audience

3.1 Introduction

In Book 8 of the Politics, Aristotle distinguishes between theatre audiences of ‘educated free men’ and those of ‘common persons, drawn from the mechanics, hired workers and such-like’ (474; 8.7). According to Aristotle, ‘[e]ach group finds pleasure in that which is akin to its nature’, meaning that ‘spectacles’ must be permitted for common audiences in theatre competitions (474; 8.7). In this chapter, I argue that the distinction between the two audiences is more than a hierarchy of aesthetic taste according to social status. Critical examination of Politics 8 in light of wider contexts of audience divisions in the Athenian theatre reveals that Aristotle bases his division on a distribution of the sensible that encodes intellectual capacities. Educated audiences are capable of critical aesthetic judgement (krisis) and thus able to recognize the propriety and ‘artistic success’ of the artwork. By contrast, ‘common’ audiences lack such aesthetic understanding and seek mere emotional pleasure or entertainment. The division, I suggest, is between the capacity for ‘spectating’, and ignorant ‘viewing’. This chapter examines Aristotle’s audience divisions in order to investigate the wider implications for Rancière’s formulation of the representative regime, and his critique of spectatorship outlined in Chapter 1.
As established in the previous chapter, an analysis of the *Poetics* reveals ways in which the representative regime can be extended to account for issues of spectatorship. In this chapter, I take my analysis further by arguing that Aristotelian spectatorship functions to ‘police’ the political possibilities of spectating by assigning intellectual capacities to subjects based on divisions of time and labour. I begin by outlining the emergence of ideas of critical spectatorship and audience divisions in the Athenian theatre. I argue that a distribution of the sensible is evident in these ideas, characterized as a distinction between ‘krisis’ and ‘thorubos’, or the ‘good speech’ of critical judgement and the ‘bad noise’ of mass audience participation. ‘Krisis’ is defined as ‘a separating, power of distinguishing’ or ‘deciding, decision, judgement’ (‘κρίσις’, def. I, 1-2).21 Thorubos, on the other hand, is ‘noise, esp. the confused noise of a crowded assembly, uproar, clamour’, and also ‘tumult, confusion’ (‘θόρυβος’ def. I, II). I outline the distribution embodied by these terms through an examination of elite and mass spectatorship in the Athenian theatre, Plato’s disparagement of democratic audiences in *Laws*, and Aristotle’s ‘parapolitical’ configuration of political participation. I suggest, with reference to Rancière, that *krisis* functions as an ‘account’ of viewership that is ‘more than’ viewing.

My examination of *Politics* 8 draws on the *krisis/thorubos* distribution. I argue that by identifying spectatorship with the capacity for judgement, Aristotle redeems it from the assumed ignorance and passivity of the spectator paradox. For Aristotle, the skill of *krisis* participates in the action being judged, and is cultivated via the musical education of citizens. However, Aristotle’s

21 The verb form, *krinō* is ‘[t]o separate, part, put asunder, distinguish’, or ‘pick out, choose’ (‘κρινω’, def. I, II). A ‘kritikós’ is one ‘able to discern’, or a ‘critic’ (‘κριτικός’).
recommendations concerning education make a series of distinctions that exclude workers and non-citizens based on partitions of time and activity. I argue that the distribution underpinning *Politics* 8 'polices’ spectatorship by anchoring intellectual capacities and aesthetic participation to social roles and hierarchies. The workers, for Aristotle, lack the time to ‘think’. Through an explication of the distribution of the sensible evident in *Politics* 8, I intend to expose the presuppositions, equivalences, and oppositions that underpin Aristotelian spectatorship. The distribution of the sensible has clear implications for Rancière’s critique of spectatorship, and provides for more nuanced analysis of the ‘allegories of inequality’ (*ES* 12) embedded in contemporary theories of spectatorship.

### 3.2 Krisis Versus Thorubos: Elite and Mass Spectatorship

The social context of the Athenian theatre evidences divisions between elite and mass spectatorship, which can be conceptualised as a division between *krisis* and *thorubos*. Aesthetic judgement features as a demonstration of cultural competency and education, and is associated with the task of political deliberation and decision-making. *Krisis* is an activity that combines political and aesthetic participation, one that distinguishes between the culturally privileged – the ‘ideal’ audience – and the ‘anybody whoever’. The Athenian theatre had the potential for democratic spectatorship, seating anywhere between 14,000 and 17,000 spectators (Pickard-Cambridge, *Theatre of Dionysus* 141). However, the sociology of the Athenian theatre reveals the ways in which an idealised

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22 This estimate is based on its reconstruction in the 4th C BCE by Lycurgus.
spectatorship was constructed out of elite male citizens to the exclusion of women, slaves and other non-citizens. The opposition between krisis and thorubos conceptualises a distribution of the sensible that distinguishes between the sense-making judgement of an artwork, and the noise and clamour of mass applause. It operates as an expression of whose viewership ‘counts’, dividing audiences at an aesthetic level.

The overlapping of the political and dramatic spheres in the Athenian theatre is one aspect in developing notions of krisis. Josiah Ober argues that politicians were ‘acutely aware of the continuum between politics and theater, and they exploited it in the highly charged and competitive arenas of the Assembly and popular courts’ (154). Similarly, Edith Hall argues that the foregrounding of decision-making in tragedy was ‘fed, indirectly, by the real-life experience of deliberation undergone by their Athenian citizen spectators in the Assembly and Council’ (Greek Tragedy 63). According to Hall, tragic theatre repeatedly depicts the process of deliberation that citizens serving in the Council would have experienced. Such service required ‘accumulating information, assessing past actions and deliberating about future ones virtually all day, every day’ (Greek Tragedy 65; orig. emphasis). Hall adds that ‘Greek tragedy offers a training in decision-making’, evidenced in the numerous depiction of such themes in the late tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides, which ‘became more sophisticated and extensive in parallel with the development of deliberation by citizens in the Council and Assembly’ (65). Krisis is a crucial link between the political and aesthetic spheres of the Athenian theatre because elite spectatorship exists in a realm where speech is action, and where decisions about this action must be made.
The interrelation between the political and theatrical spheres produced audience divisions based on criteria of inclusion and exclusion. The idealisation of the theatre audience as male citizens busy in the work of running the state effected the exclusion of non-citizens from the theatrical sphere. As Hall notes, Greek tragedies were considered the domain of a select few, written by male Greek citizens for an audience of citizens at a festival foregrounding citizenship. Tragedy thus ‘defines the male citizen self, and both produces and reproduces the ideology of civic community’ (‘The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy’, 95). Hall points to the discussion of tragedy in Aristophanes’ Women Celebrating Thesmophoria, in which Euripides and a close relative feature as hero-protagonists:

\[\text{[d]uring their burlesques of Euripides’ own tragedies they outwit both the women of Athens and a male, barbarian slave. These citizen heroes can participate together in the fantastic world of tragic parody (‘paratragedy’), subjecting the texts to extended quotation, travesty, and interpolation, while the women and the slave entrusted with guarding them cannot understand what they are doing.}\]

\[(‘The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy’ 96)\]

Hall concludes that tragedy is presented ‘as an intellectual property, plaything and privilege of the citizen males, to the absolute exclusion of women and slaves’
(96). Aristophanes, whose plays such as *Frogs* also feature literary parody and satirize artistic judgement, thus enacts a division between those who understand and those who do not.

These divisions are accentuated by the interrelation of dramatic participation and the act of *krisis*. Peter Wilson notes that during the Dionysiac festival the Athenian tribes would each provide up to fifty actors in order to compete; the sheer scale of the competition meant that over eleven hundred boys and men participated directly as performers each year (‘Glue of Democracy?’ 26). As Wilson continues,

this high degree of participation, among other factors, led to a very high level of competence among the citizenry – developing a kind of aesthetic-poetic and musical experiential knowledge in a wide segment of society . . . From an audience perspective, turning traditional choral performance into formal contest had the effect of constructing spectators as judges, and inculcating them in the exercise of a more abstract political . . . skill of *krisis*.

(26-27)

An interplay between aesthetic part-taking via performance, spectatorship and political/aesthetic deliberation is evident here. Wilson notes that the process of selecting the theatrical *kritai* (judges) was comparable to that of the courts; coupled with the audience’s informal approval or disapproval of plays, this

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23 Hall argues that despite this, the polyphonic form of Greek tragedy in giving voice to women, slaves and captives of war transcends its conditions of production (125). It is instructive to note that the polyphonic potential is obliterated in the *Poetics*, which instead focuses on plot form and the individual tragic protagonist.
meant that ‘[e]xperience of abstract aesthetic and political *krisis* was thus diffused very widely across the citizenry’ (‘Glue of Democracy?’ 27). In the political and dramatic realms, the discernment and deliberation of *krisis* is both a claim of expertise and a form of participation; to pass judgement is to take part in a privileged cultural sphere. As I will address in the next section, Aristotle’s discussion of democratic judgement features a similar underlying assumption; judging is an activity through which one participates in the action depicted. The participatory nature of *krisis* alleviates the troubling passivity of spectatorship.

Scholars have noted that what is now recognized as literary criticism emerges in developing notions of aesthetic *krisis*.24 Yun Lee Too, speaking of criticism more broadly, notes its political effects:

> Criticism assumes that language, oral or written, is the basis of power because it is in turn the material from which political identities are formed. In discriminating between forms of discourse in the community, it includes and excludes these discourses in ways which inevitably mirror the configurations of power within the society in question.

(11)

By validating or excluding utterances as worthy/unworthy, and determining the criteria by which they are judged, criticism maintains power relations. As Too points out, ‘[c]riticism is crisis (*krisis*) precisely because it advocates an ideal

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24 Both Yun Lee Too and Andrew Ford are concerned with aesthetic judgement in Greek culture as it pertains to the history and genealogy of literary criticism. While I return to both critics in the final section of this chapter, my concern here is with *krisis* as act of idealised spectatorship.
community and citizen against the background or in competition with other alternative ideals of community and citizen' (12). Criticism functions politically by establishing criteria for community consensus.

*Krisis* is therefore a matter of whose judgement or pronouncement is deemed worthy or authoritative, a matter of whose viewing counts. Such authority is in turn grounded in the criteria by which judgements can be made, which evolve alongside cultural values. As Ford explains, the origin of judgement in archaic poetry is primarily concerned with ‘whether the song is “appropriate” (*prepei*) to its context and occasion’, thus predominantly involving ‘social and religious values’ (* Origins of Criticism* 12). Yet the rise of poetics as a cultural concern resulted in more concrete ideas of *krisis*:

This hybrid skill, combining technical expertise with a broader vision of social harmony, was expressed by the Greeks through the metaphor of ‘judging’ (*krinein*) poetry, a metaphor we still use when we recognize such a thing as ‘literary criticism.’ It was only after the death of Aristotle, in the period of intensive literary scholarship from the third to the first centuries B.C.E, that we find professional experts in literature claiming to be ‘judges’ or ‘critics’ (*kritikoi*) of poetry.

(272; orig. emphasis)

The emergence of *krisis* in Greek culture is closely associated with archaic poetic contests. These contests took place in a shared social space, so that ‘a public declaration of who was the best performer was also a proclamation of the values
of the group sponsoring the event’ (*Origins of Criticism* 273). This form of criticism Ford calls the ‘heroic’ model, in which the judge is a ruler, king, or an elite group. The exercise of judgement becomes an extension of political power, in which ‘judgement belongs to the politically preeminent, not to the masses’ (*Origins of Criticism* 277). To participate in the activity of passing judgement validates a set of criteria as the values of the community.

As Ford outlines, the emergence of the Dionysiac festival ushers in a model of judgement that foregrounds democratic decision-making and consensus, and is on display in the highly visible civic structures of the theatre contest. The process of selecting judges for the festival was highly complex, consisting of nominations from each Athenian tribe, oaths of impartiality, secret ballots, and lotteries (*Origins of Criticism* 278). The complex procedure produced a legitimization of the resulting judgement as both fair and civic; the judges were all citizens, unlike the audience, which consisted of foreigners and non-citizens (*Origins of Criticism* 278). Such structures therefore both foreground the civic process of Athenian democracy and distinguish between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ participation. While the Athenian theatre provided for democratic viewership, the process by which this took place actually divided forms of viewership. Furthermore, despite the civic nature by which the judging panel was selected, it was radically restricted to just ten representatives (from whom five votes are ultimately taken). The effect is to contrast the decision of a legitimized few to the audience mass of the demos. The contrast is a crucial context for Aristotle’s own audience divisions in *Politics*, which are concerned primarily with maintaining a division between the educated citizenry and the uneducated mob.
This is not to say that the Athenian audience was passive. According to extant sources ‘the public itself performed quite vigorously in the theater during both the fifth and fourth centuries, sometimes even interrupting the drama’ (Wallace, ‘Poet, Public, and “Theatrocracy”’ 106). This even led at times to actors improvising plays with speeches and famous lines from other works to elicit approval from the crowd (108). As Pickard-Cambridge notes, according to one anecdote Euripides himself was forced to burst onto the stage to implore patience from an unruly audience who had taken a disliking to one of his characters (The Dramatic Festivals of Athens 274). The potential for unruliness in the crowded atmosphere of the theatre resulted in the passing of a law making riotous disturbance in the audience an offense punishable by death (Beye 127). Yet despite the distinction between the mass audience and the citizen-judges, there was no requirement that those judging the plays had any expertise in tragic performance itself (Ford, Origins of Criticism 279). Ford argues that rather than judging the literary merit of plays, the tragic festival ‘enacted a fundamental requirement of political community, the consensus (homonoia) of citizens’ (Origins of Criticism 280).

Mass audience participation is frequently expressed in Greek by the word thorubos, which carries associations with the riotous noise of a crowd. As Judith Tacon notes, instances of the word in connection to the Athenian Assembly indicate its integral connection to the process of Greek democracy. She argues that interjections and banter between various speakers, and between vocal sections of the demos ‘were wholly typical and actually integral features of Assembly debate, and, by extension, of Athenian democracy’ (177). Far from being a simple disruption, thorubos played an important role in the democratic
process: ‘[t]hrough vocal interruptions, heckling, shouts, and cheers, the *demos* would be able to communicate its views *en masse*, constituting a key aspect of democratic behaviour’ (Tacon 180). The *demos* achieved greater participation in the political realm in such instances: ‘as opposed merely to voting passively, the people were (literally) able to get their collective voice heard’ (188). Rather than having purely negative connotations, *thorubos* ‘may have a more positive meaning in the context of the democratic process in Athens’ (189). *Thorubos* therefore had an intrinsically democratic association.

The positive aspect of *thorubos* within the Assembly contrasts with Plato’s predominantly negative attitude to mass audiences. In Book 6 of *The Republic*, Plato characterizes the noise of crowds as a corrupting influence on the development of philosopher-kings. Such crowds as found in theatres, courts or Assembly ‘with a great deal of noise and a great lack of moderation, shout and clap their approval or disapproval of whatever is proposed or done, til the rocks and the whole place re-echo, and redouble the noise of their boos and applause’ (214; 492b-c). In *Laws*, Plato compares the noise of jurors to the disturbance of theatre crowds, who ‘hurl shouts of applause of disapproval’ (396; 9.876). *Thorubos*, for Plato, represents the noise, tumult, and disorder of the crowd with its many untamed desires and opinions. Commenting on the archipolitical distribution enacted by Plato, Rancière states that democracy for Plato

is the regime ... in which the voice, which not only expresses but also procures the illusory feelings of pleasure and pain, usurps the privileges of the logos, which allows the just to be recognized and organizes this realization in terms of community proportion.
In other words, the competing, tumultuous claims of the *demos* disrupt the harmonious distribution of the community, revealing the aesthetic dimension of the *krisis/thorubos* distinction as that of the ‘good speech’ of judgement and the ‘animal noise’ of riotous crowds. Shortly after his discussion of *thorubos* in *Republic* 6, Plato compares the *demos* to a ‘large and powerful animal’ that must be trained (493a-c 215). As Rancière states, ‘[t]he metaphor of the large and powerful animal is no simple metaphor: it serves to rigorously reject as animals those speaking beings with no position who introduce trouble into the logos and into its political realization as *analogia* of the parts of the community’ (*Da* 22).

The characterization of the *demos* as unruly animal noise points to the distribution of the sensible at work in Plato and Aristotle. The following examination of their attitudes to democratic spectatorship helps to establish the precise ways in which Aristotle’s *Politics* 8 ‘polices’ spectatorship.

### 3.3 The ‘Dictatorship of the Spectatorship’: Plato and Aristotle on Democratic Viewing

Divisions of audience in the Athenian theatrical and civic context distinguished between elite and mass audience participation. Such divisions serve to include or exclude subjects from privileged or ‘ideal’ viewing, and can be expressed by the *krisis/thorubos* opposition. The opposition forms a wider distribution of the sensible that underpins spectatorship for both Plato and Aristotle, and is
essential for my analysis of Aristotle’s policing of spectatorship in Politics 8. The distribution is clearly expressed in Plato’s discussion of musical education in Laws, in which Plato directly opposes the pleasure of the educated few to the untamed pleasures of the demos. A similar distribution is evident in Aristotle, but in a coded and less oppositional form. While Aristotle appears to favour democratic mass spectatorship, attention to his discussion of democratic judgement reveals that it is built upon wider distributions of activity in the state. The strict opposition between krisis/thorubos is transformed into an opposition between the capacity of krisis and its lack. Judgement, for Aristotle, is a capacity that shares in the action depicted. To lack the capacity of judgement is to merely view, which is constructed as both ignorant and non-participatory; those who view have ‘no part’.

The operation of the distribution is found in the aesthetic distinction between speech and noise, or sense and non-sense. As Rancière states, the result distinguishes

those that one sees and those that one does not see, those who have a logos – memorial speech, an account to be kept up – and those who have no logos, those who really speak and those whose voice merely mimics the articulate voice to express pleasure and pain. Politics exists because the logos is never simply speech, because it is always indissolubly the account that is made of this speech: the account by which a sonorous emission is understood as speech, capable of enunciating what is just, whereas some other
emission is merely perceived as a noise signaling pleasure or pain, consent or revolt.

(Da 22-23; orig. emphasis)

Logos is an 'account' of speech that functions to demarcate the realm of the political in opposition to the animal noise of mere voice. The demarcation of krisis within Plato and Aristotle functions as a similar 'account': it determines whose viewing participates in the logos of the artwork's intelligible content. By contrast, the thorubos of mass viewership – the raucous booing and cheering – is indicative of the uncontrolled pleasures of the demos, perpetuated through bad viewership that seeks only immediate emotional pleasure. Thorubos is not just the literal activity by which crowds respond to the artwork: it is the metaphor by which their viewing may be excluded or dis-counted from participation. Such viewing is of 'no account'.

In his discussion of choruses in Laws 2, Plato sets out to determine the correct music for use in education. The problem is the criteria by which such music might be judged. Arts cannot be judged by simple emotional pleasure, for different audiences would judge this according to their tastes: children would prefer puppet-shows, adolescents comedy, old men epic, and adults and 'pretty much near the entire populace' would prefer tragedy (94; 2.658). This leads Plato to the conclusion that

[p]leasure is indeed a proper criterion in the arts, but not the pleasure experienced by anybody and everybody. The productions of the Muse are their finest when they delight men of high calibre
and adequate education – but particularly if they succeed in pleasing the single individual whose education and moral standards reach heights attained by no one else.

(2.658-9, 94)

The quality of the artwork is determined by the quality of the audience it pleases. The problem lies in the vulgar and untamed pleasure of the _demos_, or the ‘anybody and everybody’, as opposed to the good taste of the educated person. As Plato’s Athenian states, judges therefore need ‘high moral standards’ and ‘discerning taste’: ‘[a] judge won’t be doing his job properly if he reaches his verdict by listening to the audience and lets himself be thrown off balance by the yelling [ _thorubos_ ] of the mob and his own lack of training’ (94; 2.659). Plato’s judge, then, is the ‘teacher’ of the audience whose role is to ‘throw his weight against them, if the pleasure they show has been aroused improperly and illegitimately’ (95; 2.659, orig. emphasis). In instances where the winners of competitions are determined by the simple show of hands, composers strive to appease their audiences; ‘the result is that in effect _they_ are taught by the audience’ (95; 2.659, orig. emphasis). The unchecked desires and pleasures of the _demos_ must be redirected and the noise of their _thorubos_ resisted and tamed through the superior intelligence and capacity of the educated _kritikos_.

What passes as good spectatorship for Plato – the participation in the music of the chorus – is located in the pleasure of the select few, ensuring the preservation of harmony in the choreographic community. The physical movement of the chorus acts as the participation in _logos_, directed and maintained by superior intelligences. It trains the young, who ‘are unable to keep
their bodies or their tongues still’ and ‘are always making unco-ordinated noises and jumping about’ (103; 2.664), and such bodily training demarcates the realm of the human as distinct from other animals:

[n]o other animal, we said, ever develops a sense of order in either respect; man alone has a natural ability to do this. Order in movement is called ‘rhythm’, and order in the vocal sounds – the combination of high and low notes – is called ‘harmony’; and the union of the two is called ‘a performance by a chorus’.

(103; 2.664-65)

Participation in the chorus trains the young in the harmony of movement and appropriate vocal utterances. It thereby inculcates in them the perception of logos as provided by the judges, who thus train the community. For Plato, the judges’ intelligence must be ‘thrown against’ the audience to ensure the appropriate form of the choreographic community. In the representative regime, by contrast, this superior intelligence is distributed between the good composition of the poet and the good reception of the spectator.

Bad musical education for Plato is characterized by its negative impact on the community. In Laws 3, Plato discusses the corruption of Athenian democracy. This corruption is equated to bad spectatorship and the degradation of musical taste. According to Plato’s Athenian, music was once regulated, and it conformed to categories and laws that maintained its propriety. Accordingly, ‘no notice was taken of the catcalls and the uncouth yelling of the audience’ (153; 3.700). Instead, ‘people of taste and education’ would listen silently, while children and
others who misbehaved could be disciplined; above all, the audience would
‘refrain from passing judgement by shouting [thorubou]’ (153; 3.700). However,
composers soon began to bend the rules, ‘[g]ripped by a frenzied and excessive
lust for pleasure’ (153; 3.700), leading to a ‘total confusion of styles’ (154;
3.700). These composers ignored musical standards, claiming ‘that the most
“correct” criterion is the pleasure of the man who enjoyed the performance,
whether he is a good man or not’ (154; 3.700). More degraded standards
followed:

> [c]onsequently, they [the composers] gave the ordinary man not
only a taste for breaking the laws of music but the arrogance to set
himself up as a capable judge. The audiences, once silent, began to
use their tongues; they claimed to know what was good and bad in
music, and instead of a ‘musical meritocracy’, a sort of vicious
‘theatrocracy’ arose.

(154; 3.700-1)

Plato appears to be alluding to the emergence of what modern scholars call ‘New
Music’, an artistic movement portrayed by its detractors as the result of
democratic excesses.\(^\text{25}\) The audience for Plato takes on an illegitimate authority
as the ‘theatrocracy’ or, as Edith Hall more poetically puts it, the ‘dictatorship of
the spectatorship’ (Greek Tragedy 60). The danger here is of untamed affect, of
the ‘bad’ participation of audiences yearning for pleasure. Such audiences should

\(^{25}\) As Peter Wilson notes, New Music saw the Athenian elite’s cultural dominance eroded by
‘lower class professionals and virtuosi’ (‘Glue of Democracy?’ 28). Thus, ‘New Music came to
symbolize the most threatening features of democracy itself’ (28).
not be pandered to for fear of the runaway train of artistic degradation; it is the tumultuous and untamed tastes of the democratic audience that leads to the confusion of styles. To spectate, according to Plato, is to be educated and have one’s tastes and desires shaped by the superior intellect of the critic. Thus, the threat of the democratic audience is the breakdown of the pedagogical hierarchy implicit in the choreographic community.

While Plato starkly contrasts *krisis* to *thorubos*, Aristotle internalises the opposition within spectatorship itself. Plato’s distinction between the educated judge and the unruly *demos* becomes, for Aristotle, the distinction between good and bad spectatorship, or the capacity for *krisis* and its lack. As I discuss in the next section, this is evident in *Politics* 8’s discussion of the use of music to educate citizens in aesthetic judgement, enabling them to distinguish ‘wholesome tunes from unwholesome’ ones (463; 8.5). However, it is in *Politics* 3’s description of democratic judgement that the participatory relationship underpinning the distribution is located, separating spectating from viewing. In this relationship, viewing is passive because it does not participate in action. For Aristotle, *krisis* redeems spectating from the passivity and ignorance of the spectator paradox, offering an account of viewing that is ‘more than’ viewing.

In contrast to Plato’s anti-democratic attitude, Aristotle favours – at least in principle – the democratic judgement of art: ‘it is possible that the many, none of whom taken singly is a sound man, may yet, taken all together, be better than the few, not individually but collectively’ (202; 3.11). The reason is that many people have a share of wisdom and virtue, so that when grouped as a whole ‘they become one man with many pairs of feet and hands and many senses’, and
‘become one in regard to character and intelligence’ (202-3; 3.11). Aristotle here uses the example of artistic judgement:

[t]hat is why the many are better judges of works of music and poetry: some judge some parts, some others, but their collective pronouncement is a verdict upon all the parts. And it is this that gives sound men their superiority over any individual man from the masses.

(203; 3.11)

For Aristotle, the many have a shared perception, or *aisthesis*, allowing for the proper apprehension of the work as a whole. This recalls Aristotle’s concerns throughout the *Poetics* with the wholeness, size, and proportion of the tragic plot as perceived by the viewer (1450b-51a). At face value Aristotle appears to refute Plato’s opposition between elite and mob judgement of art. However, Aristotle qualifies his argument by stating that the superiority of mass judgement does not occur in every large group, such as wild animals and ‘some men’ who are barely better than animals (203; 3.11). Democratic judgement is firstly a matter of whose judgement ‘counts’, which places it within the parapolitical distinction between participation and exclusion from *logos*.

A key aspect of the distribution that underpins the representative regime of spectatorship occurs in Aristotle’s discussion of democratic political judgement, in which he questions the judgement of the mass of free citizens:
[w]e must remember that they [the mass of citizens] are not men of wealth, and have no claim to virtue in anything. To let them share in the highest offices is to take a risk: inevitably, their unjust standards will cause them to commit injustice, and their lack of judgement will lead them into error. On the other hand there is a risk in not giving them a share, and in their non-participation, for when there are many who have no property and no honours they inevitably constitute a huge hostile element in the state. But it can still remain open to them to participate in deliberating and judging.

(3.11, 203)

Political democratic judgement for Aristotle is a matter of sharing in the activity of rule. Aristotle distinguishes between those fit to take office, and those who have no claim and therefore no part; those who can, do, while those who can’t, judge. Judgement, or krisis, is therefore an activity that affords a part to those unfit for rule, including them in the activity of leadership. In giving a part to those otherwise excluded, such democratic judgement neutralises the threat of the ‘huge hostile element’ of those without-part. The relationship at play here results in the passivity and non-participation of viewing: those excluded from the activity of judgement – the non-citizens – merely view. Like the slave who recognizes but does not participate in logos (Politics 69; 1.5), the ‘viewer’ looks but does not take part. Conversely, to be excluded is to be relegated to the status of mere viewer, while to judge is to be included in the good form of spectatorship that participates in the action.
Krisis is a capacity linked to the apprehension of a ‘whole’. As Aristotle states, the reason behind the decision to grant democratic power to people to elect officials

was on the principle that the whole body acting together has the necessary perception [ʼaisthēsisʼ], even though each is individually only partly qualified to judge. By thus mixing with the better sort, they render good service in their states, in something like the way that a combination of coarse foods with refined renders the whole diet more nutritious than a small amount of the latter.

(204; 3.11)

Democratic judgement functions under a law of equivalences; the citizen body is useful, but only in the proper proportion. The lower-class citizens – specified earlier as those without claim to virtue in anything – are the democratic roughage to keep the bowels of state bureaucracy regular. Their service is rendered via their perception and contribution to the whole. Their democratic role is primarily an issue of participation in order to cumulatively achieve a good viewing or the ‘necessary perception’.

Aesthetic judgement and political judgement are closely intertwined for Aristotle, which, as we have seen, reflects wider civic and political ideologies within the Athenian theatre. Both aesthetic and political judgements participate in the activity being judged: the leadership of those qualified to rule, or the artwork’s representation of action. This reflects the wider privileging of action in the representative regime, as I outlined in Chapter 2; art, for Aristotle, represents
an action that is transmitted to the spectator. *Krisis* is a capacity of spectatorship that redeems it from the passivity of the spectator paradox through the relationship of participation: it is an activity that shares in activity. Hence, *krisis* is an account of viewing that is 'more than' viewing, just as *logos* is an account of speech that is more than speech (*Da* 22-23). In splitting spectating from viewing, Aristotle doubly confirms the passivity of viewing.

*Krisis* and *thorubos* therefore signify a distribution of the sensible that underlies Plato and Aristotle’s descriptions of spectatorship, but there are important differences between the two. Plato’s strict opposition between the *krisis* of the educated individual and the *thorubos* of the untamed masses characterizes the judge – or the *kritikos* – as the teacher who must ‘throw his weight against the masses’ (*Laws* 95; 2.659, orig. emphasis). In Aristotle, on the other hand, this distribution is found in the distinction between the capacity of *krisis* and its lack. Further, in the Platonic formula, the intelligence of the *kritikos*, charged with the task of maintaining musical standards, teaches and educates the masses. In the Aristotelian representative regime, this intelligence is doubled. It is firstly that of the poet, whose crafting of the well-constructed plot according to rules of genre enables its appropriate effect. But this good activity also requires spectators capable of apprehending artistic success. As Rancière states, within the representative regime ‘[t]he principle of decorum defines a relation between the author and his subject whose success can only be judged by the spectator – a certain kind of spectator. Suitability is felt’ (*MS* 47). As we are about to see, it is in *Politics* 8’s discussion of musical education that Aristotle gives an account of this second intelligence in the form of the citizen educated in the capacity of *krisis*. 
3.4 The Time to Think: Politics 8 and Aristotle’s Split Audience

In *Politics* 8, Aristotle establishes the division between critical spectatorship and ignorant viewership. The division is the mechanism by which spectatorship in the representative regime is redeemed from the ignorance and passivity of the spectator paradox. As I established in the previous section, *krisis* operates to ‘share’ in the activity being judged via a participatory relationship. In this section I will explicate how Aristotle’s discussion of musical education situates *krisis* among a larger structure of ‘good activities’. It is through this structure that spectatorship is redeemed from ignorance. The skill of *krisis*, developed through proper education, is the capacity of ‘liking and hating the right things’ that allows the spectator to respond appropriately, according to the artwork’s construction (*Politics* 465; 8.5). Such spectators, capable of judging artistic fineness, are able to recognize and thus participate in the good intelligence of the poet’s successful composition.

But the redemption of spectatorship is achieved only by reconfirming the passivity and ignorance of viewing. If *krisis* is an ‘account’ of viewing, then its lack demarcates those of no-account, which Aristotle variously characterizes as women, slaves and workers. It is no coincidence that these spectators are excluded from both political and aesthetic participation. As we will see, the wider distribution of the sensible that operates in Aristotle’s division of spectatorship grounds intellectual and political inequality in divisions of labour, activity, and time within the state. The distribution functions through forms of participation: because of their participation in labour, workers do not have time for political
participation. Conversely, citizens have the free time for both political participation and the cultivation of leisure and virtue. This is indicative of Aristotle's parapolitical procedure, whereby the actors of political conflict are incorporated into ‘the forms of distribution of the policing apparatus’ (Da 72). Rancière's critique asserts that within parapolitics there is no ‘politics', only the management of ‘parts’, such as the demarcation of citizen and non-citizen. As my analysis of spectatorship reveals, such management – or policing – is enacted through the apportionment to subjects the capacity of seeing.

In the final chapter of Politics 8, Aristotle ends his discussion with elements that are characteristic of the representative regime: the division of music into hierarchical modes, each with a specific nature and effect. He states that all musical modes can be of use, but for different purposes; 'ethical’ modes must be used for education, while ‘active and emotion-stirring’ modes can be used for cathartic purposes due to their emotional effects (473-74; 8.7). This leads Aristotle to conclude that the emotional – or ‘cathartic’ – modes of music should be permitted for use in theatre contests (474). But in describing the theatre, Aristotle distinguishes between educated and 'common' types of audience, each taking pleasure in the music suited to their ‘nature' (474). Hence, a hierarchical relationship of propriety is established, similar to that identified in the Poetics; musical modes – or genres – are linked to their effect and ideal audience. In the discussion that follows, I explicate how Aristotle's stipulations delineate the appropriate activities for citizen-students. In a number of places, Aristotle separates these activities from the potentially corrupting activities more suited to ‘mechanics', or workers. The effect is the separation of activities according to intellectual hierarchies.
As I mentioned earlier, scholars have located within Aristotle's discussions of *krisis* and musical education the beginnings of what is now recognized as literary criticism. Both Yun Lee Too and Andrew Ford read *Politics* 8 alongside the *Poetics*, pointing to the political consequences of Aristotle’s distinctions. As Too notes, in Book 8 ‘Aristotle presents a literature institutionalized through and in *paideia* ["education"] as a strategy for fashioning and reinforcing an ideal identity for the citizen and his state’ thus establishing the use of education in ‘privileging desirable discourses and in excluding unproductive or disruptive ones as far as the state is concerned’ (89). Too further argues that the *Politics* and *Poetics* both reinforce ‘an image of a selective and stratified society in which the élite, namely the author himself and the citizen he depicts, dictate the acceptable forms of art and the appropriate responses to art’ (113). Too’s observations bring attention to the social hierarchies embedded in Aristotle’s discussion of citizens’ education.

Ford reads *Politics* 8 and the *Poetics* in light of the catharsis-debate. Ford, addressing Aristotle’s condoning of emotional and cathartic music, writes, ‘[m]usical *katharsis*, base as it may be, is useful when relegated to public performances where there is no need to teach anything. In the theater, for example, everyone may take the pleasure of it to the extent that each has a little enthusiasm in the soul’ (*Katharsis*’ 121). As a result, ‘[t]he free and educated will be pleased at the city’s spectacles, but will be immune to any vulgarizing effect; the lower orders will perhaps be even more pleased by a form of music that matches their natures, but they will also be refreshed, and so enabled to go back to work’ (121). In Ford’s analysis, the ability of the educated to resist the lower response is a result of their higher apprehension of the artwork:
[t]he most important, if less visible, distinction in the uses of music is the one that separates the free and educated from the rest of the population, the women, slaves, laborers, and foreigners whose birth has not rendered them fit for formation. The educated will respond to music’s lower promptings, but they will also be able to do something more: they will judge the performance.

('Katharsis' 121)

As Ford usefully clarifies, the Poetics outlines a systematic understanding of the art of poetry, but it was the Politics that articulated a role for criticism as part of the equipment of the educated citizen and spelled out the intellectual and moral discipline needed to produce a kritikos' (The Origins of Criticism 293). The implication is that criticism requires rigorous education in the criteria for judgement. Critical spectating therefore implies a distinction between intelligent and ignorant apprehension of the artwork.

Central to the distribution underlying spectatorship in Politics 8 is the division of labour and time, which in turn determines forms of participation and intellectual capacities. This relationship is evident earlier in Book 3, in which Aristotle states that mechanics are excluded from citizenship because they lack the free time to participate in office, while their labour in turn is required so others may participate (184; 3.5). A related claim is made in Book 7 about labour and the capacity of virtue:
the citizens must not live a mechanical or commercial life. Such a life is not noble, and it militates against virtue. Nor must those who are to be citizens be agricultural workers, for they must have leisure to develop their virtue, and for the activities of a citizen.

(Politics 415; 7.9)

The workers’ exclusion from citizenship is predicated on the lack of time, which prevents the cultivation of virtue and the proper participation in office. Leisure is a possibility and luxury of time. The subordination of labour is reflected in Aristotle’s wider separation, throughout Book 8, of leisured activities from practical concerns. Earlier in Book 7, Aristotle questions whether a life of active statesmanship or philosophical contemplation is preferable (395; 7.2), before concluding that the active life and active intelligence need not merely be concerned with practical results: ‘[o]n the contrary, thinking and speculation that are their own end and are done for their own sake are more “active” because the aim in such thinking is to do well, and therefore also, in a sense, action’ (401; 7.3, orig. emphasis). Thinking, according to Aristotle, is most active when done for its own end by those who possess the time.

The exclusion of workers forms the backdrop for further distinctions in Book 8. In the second chapter, Aristotle questions appropriate forms of activity in the education of citizens. Some activities are better suited to mechanics, and can transform and degrade citizens into mechanics themselves.

We must reckon a task or skill or study as mechanical if it renders the body or intellect of free men unserviceable for the uses and
activities of virtue. We therefore call mechanical those skills which have a deleterious effect on the body's condition, and all work that is paid for. For these make the mind preoccupied, and unable to rise above lowly things.

(454; 8.2)

The problem here is not simply the vulgarity of manual labour, but the effect such activity has on the capacity for thought. By toiling, workers are unable to leave the world of their labour, with their thoughts fixed on the task at hand.

Before discussing critical spectatorship, Aristotle is careful to separate this capacity from the practical realm of the everyday. His separation thus continues the distribution of activity and passivity characteristic of the spectator paradox. As Rancière states, such divisions embody 'allegories of inequality':

the opposition of seeing and doing returns as soon as we oppose to the blindness of manual workers and empirical practitioners, mired in immediacy and routine, the broad perspective of those who contemplate ideas, predict the future or take a comprehensive view of our world. In the past, property owners who lived off their private incomes were referred to as active citizens, capable of electing and being elected, while those who worked for a living were passive citizens, unworthy of these duties.

(ES 12-13; orig. emphasis)
By separating citizens from workers and spectatorship from viewership, Aristotle demarcates the world of thought from the world of labour. Spectatorship, in the representative distribution, concerns more than the appreciation of art: it is predicated on and refers to a capacity for thought.

Further evidence of these distinctions is found in Aristotle’s discussion of the use of education for the appreciation of leisure later in life. Aristotle distinguishes between leisure and ‘play’, which ‘has its uses, but they belong rather to the sphere of work; for he who toils needs rest, and play is a way of resting, while work is inseparable from toil and strain’ (456; 8.3). Play is a kind of entertainment – a ‘cure’ that produces and allows for rest (456). Leisure, on the other hand, contains ‘pleasure, happiness and the blessed life’; education is therefore required to determine the correct pleasures suitable for the ‘civilized pursuits’ undertaken in leisure. Musical education for the development of discernment is not ‘useful or essential’ but instead ‘elevated and worthy of free men’ (457; 8.3). Aristotle goes on to stress that students should not learn drawing for mimetically practical purposes (such as to be able to judge errors in craftsmanship when buying tools), but in order to cultivate the proper appreciation of beauty (457). In these ways, Aristotle divorces artistic education from straightforward instances of mimetic didacticism – the purpose of such education is to recognize the beautiful. Further, the division of leisure from ‘play’ distinguishes the pleasure of entertainment from the pleasure of culture. Aristotle’s distinctions and recommendations appear to carefully regulate the forms of activity deemed conducive to the proper education of the citizen.

In chapter 5 of Book 8, Aristotle’s intricate argumentation includes the separation of three uses and effects of music, which evidences a concern with
genre characteristic of the representative regime of art. Music has three uses: amusement, character formation, and leisurely pursuits. Amusement, or ‘refreshment’, is akin to ‘having a sleep or taking a drink’ in that it is not serious but pleasant, allowing us to ‘forget our worries’ (462; 8.5). Thus amusement is a form of relaxation, a ‘kind of cure for the ills we suffer in working hard’ (463). This picks up on the earlier discussion of ‘play’ in a way that suggests the modern notion of entertainment. Character formation, however, acts as a stimulus to virtue ‘by accustoming men to be able to enjoy themselves in the right way’ (462). Aristotle connects this to the ability to ‘judge’ appropriate pleasures by ‘distinguishing correctly wholesome tunes from unwholesome’ (463). The capacity for krisis is explicitly associated with virtue, and results from the ability to distinguish between good and bad artworks. Here we see an opposition between pleasure (amusement) and education (character-formation) that is distinctive of Aristotle’s divisions of audience response; to seek pleasure in art is directly opposed to its use in the education of virtue. Such pleasure is linked to the toils of labour – beneficial, but ultimately of a different order than the higher educative use.

The opposition is reinforced in Aristotle’s discussion of character-formation. Although amusement is an ‘incidental result’, we must determine whether ‘the true nature of music is not something of greater value’, such as its ‘effect on the character and soul’ (464). Aristotle states:

when listening to imitative performances all men are affected in a manner in keeping with the performance, even apart from the tunes and rhythms employed. And since it so happens that music
belongs to the class of things pleasant, and since virtue has to do with enjoying oneself in the right way, with liking and hating the right things, clearly there is no more important lesson to be learned or habit to be formed than that of right judgement ['to krinein'] and of delighting in good characters and noble actions.

(465; 8.5)

The development of character and virtue consists in the cultivation of appropriate judgement and aesthetic discrimination, allowing for the ‘liking and hating of the right things’. Education in music provides for the development of this skill, allowing the citizen to determine and therefore respond to ‘noble’ representations.

The ability to respond in such a manner depends on being able to apprehend the representational depth of the artwork. As Aristotle outlines, in music ‘there is the closest resemblance to the real natures of anger and gentleness’ and other emotions; ‘the fact that hearing such sounds does indeed cause changes in our souls is an indication of this’ (465). Further,

To have the habit of feeling delight (or distress) in things that are like reality is near to having the same disposition towards reality itself. I mean if a man enjoys looking at a likeness of someone for no other reason than the actual shape of it, then inevitably he will enjoy looking at its original too.

(465; orig. emphasis)
The mimetic content of the artefact produces an aesthetic response in the viewer that is tied to reality. But this content is not found in every part of the artwork, as Aristotle goes on to make a subtle distinction between representation and signification. Continuing his analogy of visual art, he states that other senses such as taste and touch do not refer to character, and that in painting ‘the postures and colours that are produced are not strictly representations of characters but indications rather’ (465). Halliwell explains that here Aristotle separates representation and signification:

> [t]he experience of music appears, for Aristotle, to be a matter of experiencing emotions that are not just indicated or evoked (as they might be, on his view, in a painting) but are in some sense enacted by the qualities of the artwork. That these qualities are ‘in’ the (musically organized) sounds themselves is inferred from music’s capacity to convey emotional-cum-ethical feelings to the audience. Such feelings are, in part at least, a matter of movement, kinesis (cf. 1340b8–10), perceived not as spatial change but as the experience of affective sequences or impulses, which elsewhere too Aristotle sometimes describes as ‘movements’ of the soul.

(Aesthetics of Mimesis 159-60; orig. emphasis)

While it is a relatively subtle distinction, the effect is to reinforce the aesthetic depth that is characteristic of the representative regime. True aesthetic content is not a matter of surface ‘signs’; rather, it is located in the artwork such that it ‘enacts’ the emotional content. This appears to mirror Aristotle’s privileging of
action throughout the *Poetics*, and statements like that in Chapter 6 that colours smeared at random are less pleasurable than a black-and-white sketch (1450b 28). Furthermore, it reveals the higher ‘educative’ use of music to be more than an abstract cognitive exercise, for the ethical experience of music is an emotional one, in which the listener gives himself up to the artwork. Successfully crafted art is not just recognized – it is felt.

The effect of music on character and virtue therefore stands in contrast to its pleasurable use as mere amusement. The educative use of music depends upon and strengthens the student’s exercise of critical judgement and discernment, which results from an active participation in the *logos* of the artwork. Music as entertainment, by contrast, is a passive experience of gratification with no other end than the momentary relief from toil. These divisions are in turn produced by divisions of labour found throughout the *Politics*. The lower classes, busied with quotidian struggles lack the time to participate in governance, leisurely and civilized pursuits and the development of the skill of *krasis*. Educated citizens, through their participation in the good activity of education, are able to appreciate the propriety of the artwork and thus participate in its *logos*.

Aristotle goes on to make a number of other stipulations regarding education that further reinforce divisions between good and bad activities in his discussion of instrument-playing as an aspect of education. Aristotle questions if students should themselves learn to play, or simply benefit from the performance of others. Aristotle argues the former is preferable:
Clearly, personal participation in playing is going to make a big difference to the quality of the person that will be produced, because it is impossible, or at any rate difficult, to produce sound judges of musical performances out of those who have never themselves played.

(468; 8.6)

Participation in musical performance is crucial in forming the appropriate skills of judgement, allowing citizens to ‘judge fine music and enjoy it in the right way’ in adulthood. This reinforces yet again the participatory nature of good spectatorship for Aristotle, which is a matter of participating in both the content of the artwork and the wider activities of good education and virtuous citizenship.

Yet this musical participation must be strictly managed. In a passage that mirrors his earlier warnings about education in ‘mechanical’ skills, Aristotle cautions that musical performance must be cut off after childhood for fear of turning students into mechanics or musicians:

[s]uch a result can be avoided if the pupil does not struggle to acquire the degree of skill that is needed for professional competitions, or to perform those peculiar and sensational pieces of music which have penetrated the competitions and thence education. Musical exercises should not be of this kind, and should be pursued only up to the point at which the pupil becomes capable of enjoying fine melodies and rhythms, and not just the
feature common to all music, which appeals even to some animals, and also to a great many slaves and children.

(469; 8.6)

Aristotle's advice echoes his observations in *Poetics* 26 regarding actors who exaggerate to impress audiences (1461b), and Plato's warnings against the influence of democratic audiences on judges in *Laws* (2.259). Musical education allows students to appreciate artistic fineness and thus become immune to the excessive pleasures available to all – even to animals. The danger with such pleasure is that it makes no social distinction, appealing to anybody and everybody – even those deprived of *logos* and political participation. While Aristotle does not discuss thorubos, his warnings here recall aspects outlined in the last section, in which the uneducated desires and demands of the masses in pleasure-seeking result in the clamour of voices. Aristotle's discussion of instruments outlines something akin to the gentleman-amateur, whose musical skill is directed toward his own virtuous refinement, rather than the pleasure of others. Musical education therefore exists within larger distinctions between speech and voice, labour and leisure, *logos* and noise, education and entertainment, and *krisis* and *thorubos*.

In discussing the playing of instruments Aristotle outlines requirements that conform to the representative regime's rules of genre and decorum. Here he forbids the use of the 'pipes' or *aulos* in education (469), an instrument identified in the *Poetics* as appropriate to the lower genres of art (1448a 18). The *aulos* require 'the skill of a professional' and 'are not an instrument of ethical but rather of orgiastic effect', and thus should be reserved for cathartic performances.
Additionally, playing the aulos prevents the use of speech and distorts the face (469-70). Aristotle reflects an attitude to the aulos common in wider Greek thought. As Peter Wilson argues, despite the prevalence of the instrument in Greek culture,

\[\text{[t]he aulos was a danger: it threatened self-control; it marred the aesthetics of the body; it introduced the allure of the alien. So often troped as the enemy and antithesis of logos, the aulos blocked the mouth, that most idealized of all the features of the citizen's comportment, corporeal and political.}\]

\[('The Aulos in Athens' 58)\]

Wilson argues that '[t]he aulos in Athens is an enemy of the rational mind' (87), which Aristotle confirms: increased leisure led to its use by citizens, yet it fell from favour ‘as men became better able to discern what tends to promote virtue and what does not' (Politics, 470; 8.6). The aulos is therefore associated with lower and less refined musical performance, and inappropriate for the pursuit of virtue. Aristotle's guidelines concerning musical instruments are further evidence of the representative rules of genre and decorum; particular instruments are appropriate for particular musical genres and audiences.

Aristotle states that musical education that aims for the development of a professional level of skill should be rejected, ‘for in this kind of education the performer does not perform in order to improve his own virtue, but to give pleasure to the listeners, and vulgar pleasure at that’ (471; 8.6). Such a lowly practical occupation is not fit for free men but for mechanics: ‘[t]he listener is a
common person and usually influences the music accordingly, so that he has an effect both on the personality of the professionals themselves who perform for him, and, because of the motions which they make, on their bodies too’ (471; 8.6). Professional performance threatens the artistic integrity of music as a result of the audience's influence, leading to the corruption of the performer's character.

Musical education is a highly regulated activity for Aristotle, providing citizens with the skills of *krisis* that form the basis of good spectatorship. Aristotle's discussion of musical modes and rules regarding appropriate instruments and effects shows that this education exists firmly within the larger principles of the representative regime of art. *Krisis* is foremost a skill that recognizes the rules of genre decorum in the representative regime, allowing spectators to respond appropriately. Musical education therefore results in spectators capable of recognizing artistic excellence or success – the normative principle signalled throughout the *Poetics* as to *kalōs* or ‘fineness’. Education, for Aristotle, allows spectators to see.

With these distinctions in mind, I now return to the discussion of the division of musical modes and theatrical audiences in the final chapter of *Politics* 8, in which Aristotle sets out to determine whether all musical modes should be used for education, or if distinctions should be made (472; 8.7). Music should, he states, be separated into ‘ethical, active and exciting’ modes and ‘educative’, ‘cathartic’ and ‘civilized’ purposes (473; 8.7). Aristotle then separates the modes according to their effect and use:
we must make use of all the modes, but we are not to use them all in the same manner: for education we should use those which are most ethical, whereas for listening to others performing we should accept also the most active and the most emotion-stirring.

(473; 8.7)

Here we see aspects of Rancière's description of the representative regime in Aristotle's division of genres – or musical modes – according to desired effect. Art can be separated according to its educative or emotional use, thus preserving the distinction throughout Book 8 between entertainment and education. As Aristotle asserts, some melodies 'have an orgiastic effect on the soul', and restore people as if they had experienced catharsis (473-4; 8.7). Whatever catharsis may mean here, it is posited as appropriate to a particular kind of music and person, and is not harmful in itself. 'Hence', Aristotle states, 'these are the modes and melodies whose use ought to be permitted to those who enter contests in music for the theatre' (474; 8.7).

After dividing musical modes according to action and use, Aristotle proceeds to divide audiences:

[n]ow in the theatre there are two types of audience, the one consisting of educated free men, the other of common persons, drawn from the mechanics, hired workers and such-like. For the relaxation of this latter class also competitions and spectacles must be provided. But as their souls have become distorted, removed from the condition of nature, so also some modes are
deviations from the norm, and some melodies have high pitch and irregular colouring. Each group finds pleasure in that which is akin to its nature. Therefore permission must be given to competitors before this class of audience to use the type of music that appeals to it. But for educational purposes, as we have said, we must use tunes, and modes too which have *ethical* value.

(474; 8.7, original emphasis)

Within the representative regime, the separation of musical modes enables the hierarchical separation of spectators, reflecting and confirming *Poetics* 26’s splitting of tragedy from its material performance to exclude vulgar audiences. Here we see that the representative regime of spectatorship redeems the spectator paradox by relegating ‘spectacle’ to the common audience. Such common and uneducated audiences are unaware of the vulgarity and distortion of art because they seek only the low aim of pleasurable emotional release or entertainment. Thus the hierarchical divisions found throughout Book 8 preserve the distinction between good and bad spectatorship. The distinction is between spectatorship capable of distinguishing and judging the representational excellence of an artwork, and the viewership for which spectacles must be provided – the ‘anybody whoever’, whose experience of art remains an indiscriminate *thorubos*.

Aristotle ends *Politics* 8 with a discussion that reinforces the representative regime’s principle of genre. Turning to specific musical modes, Aristotle posits that the Dorian mode is effective for education, ‘but we must also admit other modes if they have passed the scrutiny of those who combine the pursuit of
philosophy with musical education’ (474; 8.7). Musical education is vital for determining propriety within the representative regime, distinguishing the need for and the use of specific modes. Aristotle criticizes Plato for permitting the Phrygian mode in *The Republic* (399a-e), while also banning the use of the *aulos*, objecting that ‘among the modes the Phrygian has exactly the same effect as the pipes (*aulos*) among instruments: both are orgiastic and emotional’ (475; 8.7). Aristotle is therefore concerned with generic decorum and propriety: modes of music have certain effects, suitable for certain audiences and produced by certain instruments. This is confirmed when Aristotle states that ‘[e]xperts in this field point to numerous examples, notably that of Philoxenus, who tried to compose *The Mysians* in the Dorian mode, but could not do so: the very nature of his material forced him back into the Phyrigian, the proper mode’ (475; 8.7). The educated citizen’s skill of *krisis* enables the distinction between the proper uses, actions, and roles of music. It is indicative of the representative regime that Aristotle does not outright censor the *aulos*, despite his earlier concerns about its corrupting effect. Instead, such vulgar instruments must be confined to the appropriate genres, actions and audiences – distinctions made by sufficiently educated poets, and recognized as appropriate by critical spectators. The effect is that the musical modes are separated according to rules of propriety and effect, reflecting the tendencies and rules of genre evident throughout the *Poetics*. Aristotle’s stratified stipulations concerning the composition of art are matched in *Politics* 8 with a series of hierarchically stratified rules and guidelines concerning the education of citizens that will enable them to recognize art.
3.5 Conclusion

Aristotle’s regime of spectatorship ‘redeems’ spectators from the implicit ignorance and passivity of spectating. He achieves this redemption by splitting art from spectacle, and spectating from viewing. As my examination of Politics 8 shows, the separation of spectatorship is predicated on the intellectual capacity of *krisis*, by which citizens may judge the artistic success of an artwork and thereby participate in its ‘activity’. The experience is not abstract or merely intellectual, but felt on an emotional level corresponding to the apprehension of the artwork’s representational depth. But the appreciation of such aesthetic depth requires an education that teaches people ‘to enjoy themselves in the right way’ and distinguish ‘wholesome tunes from unwholesome’ (*Politics* 462, 463; 85). The citizen students are therefore able to discern and appreciate ‘fine melodies and rhythms’, rather than only the pleasure ‘common to all music, which appeals even to some animals, and also to a great many slaves and children’ (469; 8.6). *Krisis* is an ‘account’ of viewing that demarcates the cultivated pleasures of the citizenry in contrast to the unruly pleasures of the *demos*. Aristotle permits the *thorubos* of the masses by sanctioning spectacles for their entertainment, while preserving the experience of art *as such* for educated critics.

My analysis of *Politics* 8 has highlighted the intellectual inequalities embedded in Aristotelian spectatorship, and establishes the importance of Rancière’s pedagogical critique for his engagement with spectatorship. For Aristotle, uneducated audiences fall victim to base pleasures because their way of life mires them in quotidian everyday existence. Just as workers’ lack of time bars them from political participation (415; 7.9), their work ‘make[s] the mind
preoccupied, and unable to rise above lowly things’ (8.2 454). Such spectators cannot learn from art, but only revel before distorted spectacles. Aristotle’s guidelines for musical education invite a reading in light of Rancière’s notion of pedagogical ‘stultification’. For Rancière, the logic of stultification takes the ignoramus as ‘one who does not know what she does not know or how to know it’ (ES 8). As a result, what the protocol of knowledge transmission teaches the pupil, in the first instance is that ignorance is not a lesser form of knowledge, but the opposite of knowledge; knowledge is not a collection of fragments of knowledge, but a position’ (ES 9). The musical education of citizens in Politics 8 is foremost an education in how to ‘see’. The result is a pedagogical tautology whereby the educated learn from art because they are educated.

My analysis of Politics 8 in light of the krisis/thorubos distinction, and the anti-optical tendencies of the Poetics points to ways in which Rancière’s critique of spectatorship and formulation of the representative regime can be further developed. Aristotle’s separation of spectating from viewing re-confirms viewing as both passive and ignorant; spectating is ‘redeemed’ only by being characterized as something other than viewing. Attention to Aristotle’s distribution of spectatorship reveals that in the representative regime – to paraphrase Rancière – good art requires good eyes that see it as such (FI 72).
**Conclusion:**

The theatre, for Aristotle, is where the educated learn and the ignorant languish. The distance between the two audiences is the distance between two intelligences: the citizen-critics, able to recognize the successful work of art, and ‘anybody whoever’, the contingent audience of those without-part whose indiscriminate viewing is unable to discern good art from spectacle. As I have determined throughout this thesis, Rancière’s critique of spectatorship in *The Emancipated Spectator* can be conceptually expanded via in-depth analysis of Aristotelian spectatorship. The outcome of my undertaking has been to highlight the intellectual inequalities embedded in spectatorship in the representative regime. These inequalities establish the importance of intellectual emancipation for Rancière’s notion of spectatorship, and by extension the importance of *The Emancipated Spectator* for Rancière’s political and aesthetic thought as a whole.

In this conclusion, I summarise my main findings and claims, and point to areas of further significance and future investigation.

In Chapter 1, I situated *The Emancipated Spectator* within Rancière’s larger political and aesthetic framework to elucidate the theoretical premises behind his identification of the spectator paradox. I argued that elements of Rancière’s critique of spectatorship appear to allude to aspects of his account of the representative principles of ‘fiction’ and ‘presence’ in Aristotle’s *Poetics* (*MS 44, 48*). According to Rancière, theories that seek to redeem spectators from ignorance and passivity enact the spectator relationship of ‘drama’, in which ‘[d]rama means action. Theatre is the place where an action is taken to its conclusion by bodies in motion in front of living bodies that are to be mobilized’
The implicit assumption of the relationship is that ‘[w]hat is required is a theatre without spectators, where those in attendance learn from as opposed to being seduced by images; where they become active participants as opposed to passive voyeurs’ (ES 4). Irrespective of whether Rancière’s allusion to the Poetics and the representative regime is intentional, I have shown throughout that thorough analysis of Aristotelian spectatorship sheds new light on the terms and assumptions of the spectator paradox.

In Chapter 2, I outlined Rancière’s conceptualisation of the representative regime of art and undertook a close analysis of the Poetics. A number of elements in the treatise are important for Rancière’s framework. While Rancière emphasises the normative principles of inclusion in the regime (PA 21), he does not consider the pedagogical implications of such requirements. Aristotle’s aim in the Poetics is to describe ‘how plots should be constructed if the composition is to be an artistic success’ (15; 1447a). The normative prescriptions produce a distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ art, and by implication ‘good’ and ‘bad’ poets. The effect is to foreground the intelligence embodied in poetic composition as the source of art’s ‘activity’; the clearest mention of ‘viewing’ in the Poetics relates to the arrangement of plots, during which poets should ‘put them directly before [their] eyes as much as possible’ (47; 1455a). In the Poetics, it is the poet’s viewing that matters – spectating is the ordered transmission of the artwork. The subordination of material performance throughout Aristotle’s treatise configures an anti-optical form of spectatorship. The result is the elimination of what Rancière calls the ‘third thing’ between teacher and student, or artist and spectator ‘that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any
identity of cause and effect’ (ES 15). Art, in the representative regime, does not mediate; rather, it presupposes spectators who are capable of recognizing artistic success.

Aristotle’s plot and genre requirements mean that the bounds of what is considered ‘art’ in the representative regime are strictly ordered. The pedagogical implications of such ordering can be illustrated by comparison to tendencies of the aesthetic regime. Oliver Davis argues that art in the aesthetic regime offers a ‘political education in the contingency of domination’ (‘The Politics of Art’ 157). Part of the regime’s political nature is its non-linear temporality, allowing artefacts from previous historical epochs to be re-read as ‘artistic’, thus configuring ‘new ways of looking’ (159). Art is contingent because the bounds of what are taken to be artistic are continually re-negotiated: ‘the discourse of aesthetics and the artworks and ways of looking which it conditions and which in turn condition it are collective, or common, property’ (159; orig. emphasis). The bounds of art are open to disruption and re-formation. As Davis states,

the meaning and indeed the being of an artwork as art is always contingent, metastable, temporally pending future re-evaluation; it can never be set in stone and no individual’s, school’s, movement’s or community’s view of it can ever be definitive or sovereign.

(‘The Politics of Art’ 160; orig. emphasis)

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26 Davis acknowledges that aspects of his argument ‘cut against the grain’ of Rancière’s writing but asserts that his account ‘is implied and dispersed through Rancière’s recent work’ (156).
The contingency of art in the aesthetic regime stands in contrast to the representative regime’s ‘policing’ of art’s boundaries. Davis argues that aesthetic contingency produces an ‘aesthetic affect’, in which artworks ‘always also convey an experience of their own contingency as art and this experience is, in turn, formative of a subjective disposition and way of looking’ (162; orig. emphasis). The ‘education in contingency’ alerts subjects ‘to view other artefacts, including the order of domination – its institutions, hierarchies, personalities and practices – as though they were contingent and open to collective renegotiation in the same way that the aesthetic regime and its artworks are open’ (163). Thus art teaches the contingency of social structures, a contingency in accordance with Rancière’s claim that ‘[p]olitics exists simply because no social order is based on nature, no divine law regulates human society’ (Da 16). In the aesthetic regime, the question of art is open; rather than Aristotle’s citizen-critics, the aesthetic regime does not ‘call for’ a particular audience. Art’s contingency means that it is open to the viewership of the ‘anybody whoever’ – a viewership representative of the very contingency of democracy.

If Davis proposes that the aesthetic regime offers an ‘education in contingency’, what kind of ‘education’ might the representative regime offer? I suggest that the representative regime offers an education in ‘stultification’, the form of pedagogy Rancière diagnoses in The Ignorant Schoolmaster as reproducing inequalities of intelligence. Such stultification ‘divides intelligence in two’, differentiating the inferior intelligence that ‘registers perceptions by chance’ from the superior intelligence that ‘knows things by reason [and] proceeds by method’ (IS 7). The pedagogy of stultification is evident in Aristotle's
divisions between citizens who learn from art and workers who seek mere entertainment as relief from labour.

The Poetics polices politics not primarily via the teaching of a specific ‘ideological’ story to spectators, such as the moral lessons concerning a tragic hero’s transgressions – what Boal labels Aristotle’s ‘coercive system’ of tragedy (Theatre of the Oppressed 29). Instead, the Poetics teaches first of all the distinction between artistic success and spectacle, a distinction perceived by the good intelligence of poets able to adhere to the rules of genre and decorum in their ordered plot composition. In short, the representative regime of art teaches that there is a distinction to be made, that spectatorship is the transmission of the poet’s intelligence to audiences themselves capable of judgement. For Aristotle, such audiences are not simply predicated on the naturalization of taste via social hierarchies – although this remains a distinct element – but on fundamental capacities that determine a subject’s ability to ‘see’.

My examination of Politics 8 alongside the Poetics’ prescriptions regarding art has illuminated the importance of Rancière’s notion of intellectual emancipation for his critique of spectatorship. As I argued in Chapter 3, spectatorship in the representative regime separates those who think from those who labour. It does so by distinguishing between a capacity and an incapacity: the good intelligence of those spectators capable of apprehending and recognizing the aesthetic success of the artwork, and the ignorance of those who cannot see because they do not know. My identification of the krisis/thorubos distinction identifies the terms of the underlying distribution at work. As Rancière states of the presuppositions of the spectator paradox, ‘[w]hy identify gaze and passivity, unless on the presupposition that to view means to take
pleasure in images and appearances while ignoring the truth behind the image and the reality outside the theatre?’ (ES 12). By ‘redeeming’ spectatorship from its supposed ignorance and passivity, Aristotle doubly confirms the ills of viewing; viewing is passive because it does not participate in the good activity embodied in the artwork, and it is ignorant because it does not know how to see. The separation, produced by Aristotle’s wider parapolitical distribution, reduces spectating to the management – or education – of capacities, which are in turn anchored in the partitioning of labour and time.

The importance of these findings extends beyond the theatre because, for Rancière, ‘[b]eing a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into an activity. It is our normal situation. We also learn and teach, act and know, as spectators who all the time link what we see to what we have seen and said, done and dreamed’ (ES 17). Spectatorship in the representative regime of art binds spectators to ways of doing and seeing. It distributes their visibility as spectators – whether or not their viewing ‘counts’ – by dictating beforehand their ability to see, know, and understand the world. One of Rancière’s persistent aims throughout his work is to elaborate the ways in which such supposedly self-evident connections can be broken.

An example is Rancière’s account, in The Nights of Labor, of the nineteenth-century floor-layer and joiner, Gabriel Gauny, who fills his world of work with a world of thought. Gauny himself writes of a fictional floor-layer working in the incomplete houses of the rich:

[b]elieving himself at home, he loves the arrangement of a room so long as he has not finished laying the floor. If the window opens
out on a garden or commands a view of a picturesque horizon, he
stops his arms a moment and glides in imagination toward the
spacious view to enjoy it better than the possessors of the
neighboring residences.

(‘Le travail à la tâche’; qtd. in Rancière, The Nights of Labor 81)

The floor-layer’s world of work is not separate from the world of contemplation.
As Rancière writes of the above passage, ‘[d]ivorcing the fleeting gaze from the
labouring arms introduces the body of a worker into a new configuration of the
sensible, overturning the “proper” relationship between what a body “can” do
and what it cannot’ (Ds 140). The account of the floor-layer disrupts the
distribution that would have workers too busy to attend to anything but the task
at hand. Rancière asserts that Gauny’s writing provided him with ‘[n]ot a
chronicle of work, but the commentary of a genuinely philosophical experience:
how to live the working-class condition philosophically’ (Staging the People 26).
The equality of intelligences is the equality of capabilities for seeing and
understanding.

As I have argued, Aristotle’s requirements for musical education and
spectatorship in Politics 8 imply that spectators must be taught to spectate. The
pedagogical relationship sheds new light on the avant-garde theorists I examined
in Chapter 1, for whom the relationship is reversed. Rather than being educated
so as to ‘see’ in the theatre, for the avant-garde the theatre is the space in which
the gaze can be reformed. For Brecht, the apparatus of the theatre aims to teach
a form of critical spectatorship that may extend beyond the auditorium:
‘[a]nxious to teach the spectator a quite definite practical attitude, directed
towards changing the world, it [non-Aristotelian drama] must begin by making him adopt in the theatre a quite different attitude from what he is used to’ (Brecht 57). Brechtian theatre teaches spectators by making the everyday appear new, provoking the ‘astonished eye’ via the alienation-effect (144). The alienation-effect ‘consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one’s attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected’ (143).

For the avant-garde, the theatre is the space where viewers may be transformed into spectators, whether it be Marinetti’s ‘gymnasium’ of the spirit (Marinetti 128), or Boal’s Spect-Actors, who enact the ‘rehearsal of revolution’ (Theatre of the Oppressed 119; orig. emphasis). In contrast, the difference for Aristotle is that education first occurs outside of the theatre, enabling subjects to experience ‘true’ art. The underlying distribution of the spectator paradox persists in the assumption that audiences must be educated to protect them from the dangers of spectacle – whether it be the imitation of ‘anything and everything’ on the tragic stage, the emotional identification with the inevitable fate of characters, or the spectacle of capitalist consumerism.

My investigation of krisis as an ‘account’ of viewing in Chapter 3 is significant for contemporary debates surrounding participatory art. As I argued, the ideal of krisis operates in Aristotle to provide a ‘share’ in the action being judged, with the consequence of relegating those excluded from judgement – who merely view – to non-participation symbolised by the noise of thorubos. In Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship (2013), Claire Bishop critiques recent trends in collaborative or ‘relational’ art, which take participation and collaboration as a means of promoting social engagement.
Using Rancière’s discussion of spectatorship, Bishop criticizes participatory artworks aimed at fostering social inclusion, which insinuate that the marginalised and excluded ‘can only be emancipated by direct inclusion in the production of a work’ (38). According to Bishop, the implicit assumption is ‘that the poor can only engage physically, while the middle classes have the leisure to think and critically reflect. The effect of this argument is to reinstate the prejudice by which working-class activity is restricted to manual labour’ (38).

We can discern elements of Aristotle’s divisions of intellectual capacity and labour in Bishop’s argument. Relegated as non-participants to bodily – rather than intellectual or creative – participation, the disadvantaged and the poor are relegated to mere viewing by the same procedure.

My identification of the ways in which Rancière’s notions of the representative regime and the spectator paradox can be conceptually expanded prompts reconsideration of the centrality of spectatorship to his political and aesthetic thought as a whole. An important part of Rancière’s political framework is his notion of ‘subjectification’ as the process of politics that is enacted through the disruption and re-formation of distributions of the sensible. It is the ‘production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience’ (Da 35). Subjectification, then, is both the staging of equality through the disruption of ‘police-orders’ and the identification of new speaking subjects whose speech has been hitherto unheard. In doing so, subjectification ‘redefines the field of experience that gave to each their identity with their lot. It decomposes and recomposes the relationships between the ways of doing, of being, and of saying
that define the perceptible organization of the community’ (*Da* 40; orig. emphasis). To Rancière’s identification of ‘doing’, ‘being’, and ‘saying’, we might usefully add ‘seeing’. To stage equality is to take a subject’s viewing as meaningful and sense making, as a ‘good’ interpretation capable of perceiving new forms of action.

This thesis suggests that a persistent form of policing enacted by philosophy and theories of spectatorship is the policing of sight. Along with the displacement of politics, the intellectual inequalities philosophy produces are apparent in the distribution that determines whether a subject sees or looks – an inequality Aristotle grounds in the possibilities of labour and time. The capacity of thought, for Aristotle, is foremost dictated by the freedom from labour, which also means the freedom of the gaze to wander from the task at hand. By contrast, emancipated spectatorship affirms the equality of all viewers. It affirms the fact that we all see and move in the same world, and that before possibilities of speech or action there are possibilities of seeing. Subjectification, as Rancière defines it, denotes a process that affirms the equality of all speaking subjects – before slaves can obey, they first must recognize and understand *logos*, thus staging their equality. Subjectification, then, does not consist of ‘transforming’ looking into seeing but in the recognition that looking already contains the possibilities of seeing, and is enacted by the same eyes.
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