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INTRODUCTION

Jacques Rancière on the Shores of Queer Theory

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This special issue of *Borderlands* proposes to consider an engagement that has never occurred, between two fields of thought that have never been (and have often resisted becoming) proper 'fields.' This issue itself must therefore *stage* that encounter, but to do so both the issue and the pieces that comprise it must flirt with a particular danger: namely, that the engagement staged here will be a 'staging' in the worst possible senses.[1] Staging could mean a false and forced construction, a merely academic exercise, or perhaps just a sham. While it goes without saying that we, as editors of the issue, hope to bring about a different sort of *staging*, it remains for us to say what sort, and why. In thinking through the encounter orchestrated and presented here, we consider the meaning of staging as a *mise en scène*. We might think such a staging in Rancière's sense as a particular partition of the sensible. In a response to a recent issue of *Parallax* devoted to his work, Rancière, speaking in the third person, discusses precisely the 'dramaturgical' aspects of his work and its refusal to solidify into a 'field' or a 'method': 'This is not a theory of politics, setting the principles *for* political practice. This is a dramaturgy of politics, a way to make sense of the aporias of political legitimacy by weaving threads between several configurations of sense' (Rancière, 2009b: 120). We might also think such a staging in the terms of queer activism, as a political confrontation (for example, ACT-UP's 'staging' of kiss-ins or die-ins). Therefore, this special issue rests on the wager that the *encounter* between the thought of Jacques Rancière and the work of queer theory will add up to much more than exercises in comparison/contrast or trumping efforts; an effective

staging of this encounter must seek to transform both fields of thought. Rancière conveys just this sense of transformation:

Performing or playing, in the theatrical sense of the word, the gap between a place where the *demos* exists and a place where it does not ... Politics consists in playing or acting out this relationship, which means first setting it up as a theatre, inventing the argument, in the double logical and dramatic sense of the term, *connecting the unconnected*. (Rancière, 1999: 88, emphasis added)

Despite being well aware ourselves that queer theory, even broadly construed, has shown little interest in the writings of Rancière, and despite understanding fully that Rancière has at best entirely ignored, at worst actively disdained, the work of queer theory (see Rancière, 2005), we chose to make this wager (as did, in their own unique ways, the authors who responded to our invitation to write and whose work constitutes this issue) for a number of significant reasons.[2] First, even a superficial reading of Rancière's conception of politics and police orders, of his understanding of subjectivization (*assujettissement*), of his theory of the subject as 'in-between' reveals powerful affinities with queer theory's thinking of norms, subversion, and subjectivity as positionality, as relationality (Rancière, 1995b; 2001). More felicitously, the logic of the tort, which is so central to Rancière's thinking of politics, may share an etymological link with the word queer.[3] Furthermore, a number of thinkers working in and around queer theory, including such influential figures as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003), Adrian Rifkin (2003, 2004), and Lauren Berlant (2007) have also taken a keen interest in Rancière – despite not necessarily bringing these areas of interest together in any explicit way.[4] Andrew Parker, translator of *The Philosopher and his Poor*, hearteningly concludes a recent essay by foregrounding this possible conjunction:

one of the best approximations of what Rancière defines as 'properly' political is the emergent Anglo-American model of queer politics: anti-identitarian, anti-statist, anti-normative in its emphatic swerving from the rhetoric of gay and lesbian civil rights. If 'We're here, we're queer, get used to it' is something other than a claim on behalf of an identity, queer theorists might look indeed to Rancière's work for its way of posing rigorously the relation between voice and body and the impossible speech acts that bind and divide them. (Parker, 2007: 75)[5]

All of this adds up to a strong case for actively engaging Rancière with queer theory, queer theory with Rancière, since the possibilities for new lines of thinking begin to multiply rapidly.[6] And, indeed, we have tried to bring together a diverse group of thinkers and writers to carry out the staging of this encounter, precisely so as to begin that process of multiplying possibilities.[7] In a recent interview, Rancière himself (in *Les Inrockuptibles*, where he shares a cover with Nicole Kidman) comments with no small degree of amusement upon the impending queering of his work in the present volume and the potential disagreements he might have with such an endeavour. Responding to

the interviewer's question about the overlaps between the queer project and Rancière's own disidentificatory work in *The Philosopher and his Poor*, Rancière admits to being intrigued by queer theory. But he goes on to claim that the question of the sexual lies at the heart of the project of queer theory, and this question, he continues, does not have a special place in his own *oeuvre* (Rancière, 2008: 29).[8]

Taking our cue from Parker's work, we might suggest that the radical potential in such an encounter lies precisely in working through the *non-sexual* aspects of queer thinking. However, before developing a suggestion such as this, we should state directly at the outset what should become quite clear upon reading their work: the contributors to this volume have no shared agenda, *certainly not ours*. And their articles were chosen (through a double-blind external review process) not for their ability to achieve any particular predetermined ends, but for their capacity to bring different, vibrant theoretical backgrounds and political perspectives to their readings of the two broadly-construed areas of inquiry that make up the axes of this special issue. Many of our contributors do choose to leave the sexual in place in queer theory (though surely not without problematizing its centrality), while others establish a critical distance from sex/uality and identity as they gravitate towards modes of queer inquiry that have little or nothing to do with the sexual.

None of this is to say, however, that we do not have our own theoretical and political concerns. And just as it would be intellectually ungenerous and stifling to inquiry if we had sought to press those concerns upon the authors (or the selection thereof), so also would it be slightly disingenuous of us to mask those investments and interests behind the screen of editorial objectivity. Much of the impetus for this special issue can be captured by the account of the fecund yet nascent connections between queer theory and Rancière's thinking that we documented in the preceding paragraphs. But our enthusiasm in bringing these areas of inquiry together also arises from a particular set of theoretical and political commitments and concerns. Put succinctly, within queer politics we worry about an increasingly normative swerve toward identity politics, and a narrow focus on state-sanctioned gay and lesbian marriage (see Stryker 2008). Within academic work receiving the general label of 'queer theory', we find ourselves anxious over the trend to make sexuality the only proper object of study, since such work quite often reduces understandings of sexuality to fixed identities or orientations. The institutionalization, domestication and one might even say banalization of queer theory has taken many forms both within and outside the academy, but most obvious have been preoccupations with same/sex marriage, the emergence of neoconservative agendas, and the return to an essentialist identitarianism (to a solidifiable subject). In the end, we have some serious concerns that the mainstreaming of the term queer, and the tendency to use it as a catch-all general term for the cumbersome stringing together of identity categories (L, G, B, T, Q, A...) may serve to make queer studies nothing more than a substitute for gay and lesbian studies.

Indeed, to borrow and perhaps turn on its head a famous line from Leo Bersani's well-known, powerful, and important early critique of queer theory – in which he worried aloud about queer theory's de-specifying of properly gay sexuality – we worry about *the de-queering of queer*.

When queer goes mainstream it has, by definition, lost its meaning, since to be normal is precisely not to be queer (Halperin, 2003). Queer must retain elements of deviance, of the perverse – a perversion we find in Rancière's early archival and historiographical work, especially *The Nights of Labour* (1989) and *The Names of History* (1994). Moreover, queer theory must challenge, resist and subvert regimes of the normal. If it fails to do so it may end up completing a process of *apolitical* catachresis in which queer comes round full circle to name the very identities that it was originally connected to, yet still distinguished from. In other words, when queer merely points to or categorizes a group of non-heterosexual identities, when it no longer actively resists heteronormativity, when it loses its capacity to thwart – at just these moments it is no longer very queer at all.

Part of the project of bringing Rancière to bear on queer theory (and vice versa) emerges from a certain optimism on our part. It is easy to forget that Rancière always remains a relentlessly optimistic thinker. But we follow Kristen Ross (2007) – who consistently reads Rancière as optimistic – when we focus on the possibility that Rancière's radical resistance to the proper, and his consistent refusal of police orders (with their attendant categories of identity and interests), might just serve to *queer* that which today travels under the heading of queer theory and queer politics. Another way of putting this might be to say that we are most interested in the possibility of distinguishing between, on the one hand, a queer politics that can easily be reduced to lesbian and gay identity interests, and on the other, a 'properly' queer politics that seeks to disrupt the police order that is regimes of normalized sexuality. Translated into Rancière's terms, queer politics as lesbian and gay interests turns into a set of strategic moves *within* the terms and framework of liberal-democratic social orders (in other words, it is simply policing). Queer *politics* is disruptive in the way Rancière says politics must be. Another way of putting this point would be to say that we are on the side of optimism and hopefulness at a time when many who work in queer theory uncritically and exuberantly embrace negativity and hopelessness.[9]

The question of the extent to which the encounter produced by this special issue will lead to the transformation of queer theory, or to the reformulation of a Rancièrian political theory, remains to be answered by the articles themselves – and by way of the potential impact they may have on those respective fields of thought and study. It is not our role to pre-judge or 'spin' the reception of these articles. Nonetheless, we can say at this point that we are heartened by the incredible diversity of approaches and by the wide variety of engagements: the

articles in this issue demonstrate forcefully (it is no accident that Badiou relates torsion to *forcing* in his work after *Theory of the Subject*) that *there is no single way or right way* to consider ‘Rancière and queer theory.’ Of course, this makes the editorial task of categorizing the articles or synthesizing their key arguments rather vexing. Certainly there are overlaps and interconnections that emerge at almost every turn upon first reading these pieces – and which only proliferate upon multiple readings. Furthermore, there is, no doubt, great potential for synergistic readings of pairs or groups of pieces. We therefore hope that this special issue will serve as an important resource for thinking, rethinking, and certainly for *teaching*, both Rancière and queer theory. Once again, however, we will not play the role of stultifiers: it is not for us to determine the uses to which these essays might be put. All of this is a roundabout way of saying that the remainder of this introduction will attempt to *map the possibilities* for reading and making use of the articles that constitute this special issue, but it will surely not circumscribe or limit those possibilities. Perhaps a better way of saying this, in Rancière’s language, is that we insist on remaining the ignorant editors (Rancière, 1991b). For this reason, the adventurous or emancipated reader (or since this is a staging, the emancipated spectator) may wish to dive into the essays directly, to read them without any trace of explication by us. But for those who want a bit of a roadmap, it follows below.

Putting Rancière on the queer theory stage

Roger Cook and Daniel Williford are both concerned to work out a queer aesthetics or a *queer politics of aesthetics* at the intersection of queer art and Rancière’s radical re-thinking of the politics of aesthetics – ‘what art can be and can do today’ (Rancière, 2008a). Cook and Williford are each in their own way aware that Rancière’s recent ‘turn’ to film, art, and literature does not constitute a break with his earlier work on politics. In fact, what both Cook and Williford demonstrate in their different ways is an absolute consistency to Rancière’s project. As Jean-Philippe Deranty has argued, there has been a tendency among critics to divide Rancière’s writings into two distinct periods: the first being concerned with political questions, equality and democratic politics in particular; the second comes in the mid-1990s when a shift is putatively detected, as Rancière moves from questions pertaining to the political to concepts of the aesthetic, to the *politics* of literature, film, and art. Deranty claims, however, that this ‘apparent division in his career ... hides a deep unity and coherence. As is well known, for Rancière, politics is aesthetic (a challenge to dominant social perception); and aesthetics is political (introducing the principle of equality in the practices, representations and perceptions that count as art and aesthetic experience)’ (Deranty, 2007: 230-31). This shifting between questions concerning literature, film, pedagogy, historiography, politics, and philosophy, has been characterized by Sudeep Dasgupta as an ‘attempt to rethink and subvert categories, disciplines and discourses’ (Dasgupta, 2008: 70). That is to say that, as Williford in particular recognizes, Rancière’s work is disturbingly in-disciplinary, falling in-between and disturbing

disciplinary divisions (Rancière, 2008c). This politics of writing, of images (which is a bodily one: ‘communication between bodies is itself always a matter of images,’ Rancière, 2009c: 16) is promiscuous, as Rancière, Williford, and Cook, wander from text to text, from image to image, from discipline to discipline. This wandering is precisely what Rancière intends by the politics of literarity and, more broadly, by the politics of literature (Chambers, 2005; Rancière, 2000, 2004b, 2004e). The promiscuous images that Cook and Williford read are ones that (like the bodies of Rancière’s proletarian workers) refuse to stay in their place. This ability for the subject *sous rature* to imagine new forms of life – what Rancière calls their ‘aesthetic capacity’ (Rancière, 2009d: 15) in the ‘aesthetic revolution’ (Rancière, 2002) – opens up an interval for an excessive, incommensurable queer politics of aesthetics.

Nina Power uses Rancière rather directly to enter into a specific queer theoretical debate. She does so by challenging Lee Edelman’s influential *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), a book that has inaugurated the so-called ‘anti-social thesis’ in queer theory. Power takes issue with Edelman’s adoption of a hopeless position against reason, a position on the other side of politics. In response, Power invokes Rancière’s conception of rational equality in order to make a space for a ‘queer rationality’ that is properly political. If Edelman is against futurity, then, for Power, Rancière is shown to be a hopeful thinker of the *a-venir*, of the to-come. In her recent essay on Badiou and Rancière, Power makes a similar case for the way in which the two dis-agree about the concept of equality, a ‘disagreement over the role of *continuity* and *strategy* in relation to equality’ (Power, 2009: 63).[11] Given that Edelman, somewhat erroneously, presses Badiou into service as someone who is against all hope, we might side with Power when she concludes that, against Badiou’s militant notion of equality, ‘Rancière’s positing of the equality of speaking beings, and of the assumption of an intelligence shared by all are in fact much more useful, and much more egalitarian’ (Power, 2009: 78). If Edelman negates the very politicality of politics and the very futurity of futurity, then Power and Rancière give us very good reason *not* to do so.

In his essay, Sam Chambers approaches the meaning of queer theory, and its transformation in recent years, through the logic of Rancièrian politics. Chambers looks for a crossing over between Rancière and queer theory in the work of Judith Butler, work that has consistently shared Rancière’s attention to the miscount, to equality, to a particular form of recognition, and to an anti-statist, radically democratic politics (see also Chambers and Carver, 2008a, 2008b). Butler has, like Rancière, been vigilantly attentive to those whose lives (and voices, bodies) don’t count as liveable (women, queers, the transgendered, Jews, the intersexed, among others) and to fashioning a politics based not on ontologized subjects, but on those objects lying outside (constitutively outside) the moral and social order. There is much to be said, and Sam Chambers has begun this conversation here, about Butler’s suspensive subjects and Rancière’s miscounts,

(his incalculable, paratactical or impossible subjects), especially as both draw on and depart from Althusserian interpellative politics and performativity/speech act theory – all in order to imagine a dissensual politics. Chambers argues here that Butler's theories of unintelligibility productively parallel Rancière's account of the democratic miscount. What brings these two thinkers of precarious political subjects together is their shared interest in what Chambers calls a 'politics of in/audibility.' Two recent examples from Butler's writing – one theoretical, one journalistic – should make this link between speech and noise, intelligibility and unintelligibility, more clear. The first is from Butler's dialogue with Gayatri Spivak on the nation state, in which Butler tries to formulate a nascent theory of what she terms 'sensate democracy' (a further link between Rancière and Spivak on subalternity, populism and speech could be traced in this vein). Amidst a discussion with Spivak concerning statelessness and illegal immigrants singing the US national anthem in Spanish, Butler says the following:

I want to suggest to you that neither Agamben nor Arendt can quite theorize this particular act of singing, and that we have yet to develop the language we need to do so. It would also involve rethinking certain ideas of sensate democracy, of aesthetic articulation within the political sphere, and the relationship between song and what is called the 'public'. Surely, such singing takes place on the street, but the street is also exposed as a place where those who are not free to amass, freely do so. I want to suggest that this is precisely the kind of performative contradiction that leads not to impasse but to forms of insurgency. (Butler and Spivak, 2007: 62-3)

And, more pressingly, in her protest against the budgetary cuts at Californian universities, she strikes an even more obviously Rancièrian note: 'The vocal and theatrical demands of the demonstrators were not, as governor Arnold Schwarzenegger quipped, just noise coming from another "screaming" interest group. On the contrary, a rare solidarity among unions, students and faculty sought to "save the university", and their cry clearly struck a chord across a broad political spectrum' (Butler, 2009).

Chambers demonstrates – in a manner that suggests a fundamental misreading of the concept of intelligibility by Edelman – how Butler and Rancière's conceptions of a politics of un/representability and in/audibility mutually illuminate each other. Both Butler and Chambers prioritize an *untimely* politics where democracy can thrive and survive, and this is a space where Todd May's post-anarchist thought emerges. While Chambers re-queers queer, Todd May invokes Rancière's logic of politics to try to develop a post-identity politics, i.e. a queer politics, but one that remains faithful to many of the most important commitments of both Marxism and anarchism, and arguably to lesbian and gay politics. Developing an argument first laid out in his recent book *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality* (2008b), May asserts that Rancière's core political idea is

one that privileges the *presupposition* of equality. Against a dangerous conception of passive equality (which he associates with Rawls and Nozick among others) May argues for an active equality, a dissensual, anarchic ethico-politics (see also May, 2007b and Critchley, 2007: 128-32). Politics, for May, is a process of de-classification; to develop a post-identitarian politics means to 'abandon the identity one has been given' (May, 2008b: 50) whether that is as a woman, gay man, lesbian, African American, *sans papier*, student, *mestizo*, Tibetan, worker (See also May, 2008a). For May, and for Rancière, politics begins with the presupposition of equality rather than with the siting of it as a goal or *telos*. If politics starts from this point then its queer potential to disrupt the existing politico-social order based on inequality, on the hierarchical police order, emerges: 'It is these dynamics present in the enactment of equality and liberty that create new possibilities and not strategic goals' (Rancière, 2008b: 182).

If both May and Chambers refuse to draw a line separating political theory from political activism, then Paul Bowman refuses to draw a line distinguishing pedagogy and political activism. By taking an implicitly queer approach to Rancière – starting with the idea of Bruce Lee as Jacototian pedagogue and working from there to the politics of Rancière – Bowman is able to remind us forcibly that the presupposition of equality May talks about, the presupposition that underpins any democratic politics, is the presupposition that people are equally intelligent. Bowman has elsewhere warned us about a kind of 'street fetishism' to be found in Judith Butler's work (arguably one could say this about the quote about the Californian universities above). Bowman stresses that Rancièrian politics is always about how we can '*cause* a wider debate' and '*induce* a social convulsion' (Bowman, 2008: 90, see also Bowman, 2007). One such anti-institutional and counter-cultural figure in whom Bowman locates an emancipatory (convulsive, queer, deconstructive) pedagogical potential is Bruce Lee. Slavoj Žižek also turns to Kung Fu films in his effusive afterword to Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics* before claiming that 'flash mobs stand for the aesthetic-political protest at its purest' (Rancière, 2004d: 79). Žižek concludes by saying that Rancière's thought and writings 'offer one of the few consistent conceptualizations of *how we are to continue to resist*' (Rancière, 2004d: 79). Bowman's lesson in aberrant pedagogy is that we need to go much, much further.

Putting queer theory on the Rancière stage

In his contribution Sudeep Dasgupta reveals the interventions Rancière was already making in his perverse book about 'perverted proletarians,' *The Nights of Labor*, on what would much later become queer theory. Specifically, that book speaks directly to the question of how to have politics 'after' the deconstruction of identity and representation. Rancière thereby becomes – in Dasgupta's hands, just as he was in Nina Power's – a potent and (again) optimistic force

in challenging the 'anti-social' wing of queer theory. Here, as elsewhere (Dasgupta, 2008), Dasgupta problematizes the ways in which words, bodies, and images are emplaced and circumscribed (Dasgupta, 2007). Mobilizing an argument found in *The Philosopher and his Poor* (2004c) and *The Nights of Labor*, Dasgupta deconstructs the opposition between proper and improper uses of bodies (and body parts: eyes, hands, mouths) and discloses how Rancière frequently questions the normative uses and proper locations of bodies. It is in moments where workers (and queers) twist their bodies away from 'the right way' that they bring about new regimes of thinking, seeing, writing, talking. This undermining of identity opens up another time, what Dasgupta elsewhere calls a 'conjunctive temporality' (Dasgupta, 2009). One of Rancière's favourite figures, whose writings Rancière collected, is the floor-layer Louis Gabriel Gauny. Dasgupta comments on Gauny in the context of temporality: 'the wandering gaze of ...Gauny alights on the beauty of the house he should see only as a work-site, and converts the time of work to that of aesthetic appreciation' (Dasgupta, 2009: 16). It is in the improper bodies of Rancière's queer worker subjects-in-the-making that Dasgupta locates new spatio-temporal arrangements and possibilities for being-with, for an in-disciplinary (Rancière, 2006d), a queer relationality.

Oliver Davis also attempts to develop what he calls a 'Rancièrian queer theory,' one which demands (of queer theory) a Rancièrian challenge to heteronormativity and (of Rancière himself) a 'setting aside' of Rancière's only explicit remarks on queer theory. Like Andrew Parker in his essay cited above, Davis sees a certain surface irritability between Rancière and queer theory, especially given Rancière's remarks on Foucault and sexuality and given Rancière's somewhat complicated relationship to psychoanalysis – a relationship that remains complicated despite Žižek's attempts to recuperate Rancière for a Freud-Lacanian political ontology. (see Žižek, 2006; Cf. Žižek, 1999: 171-244; see also Guenon, 2004). However, Davis, like Bowman, goes on to develop a radically egalitarian queer theory committed (as Dasgupta also argues) to the words of ordinary subjects-in-the-making. As with Power, Davis finds spaces of overlap between Rancière and Edelman, but, through a reading of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Davis is able to claim that Rancière avoids a reproductive futurism and instead offers more livable forms of being that can *queer* lines of filiation and kinship without opting for narcissistic solipsism or an apolitical *sinthomosexuality*.

Hector Kollias similarly begins from the position that ours is an unlikely convocation of queer theory and Rancièrian thinking. Despite the seductive possibilities offered by a whole range of Rancièrian concepts – such as *demos*, equality, tort, subjectivation – Kollias, like Davis, finds a tangible irritability between the two. Indeed, he stages his essay as a *confrontation* rather than a marriage between the unlikely couples of Rancière and queer theory, on the one hand, and Rancière and Edelman, on the other. Even though he covers similar ground to Power (and to MacCormack, Davis and Dasgupta) Kollias constructs a slightly different argument by reading Rancière and

Edelman in terms of their dis-agreement, their speaking past one another. Kollias agrees with the other contributors that Rancière is a more optimistic, radically humanist thinker and Edelman a negative inhumanist one, but Kollias leaves his own readers with a difficult choice: to take up the position of Edelman's queer political subject is to accept a place outside the police order (heteronormativity) but it is also to lodge oneself in a position outside Rancière's idea of politics. As we have seen, both Power and Davis choose Rancière's position.

Richard Stamp and Charles Phillips both bring queer theory to Rancière by way of other thinkers (Deleuze in Phillips's case, Derrida and Foucault in Stamp's case) who are themselves *not* queer theorists, or, rather *are* queer theorists, but *avant la lettre*. Deleuze has become increasingly central to queer theory because, like Rancière he offers a way out of discursivity, identitarianism, representation, and signification (see O'Rourke, 2005/2006; Nigianni and Storr, 2009). However, *Difference and Repetition*, a book that lacks an obvious political engagement with questions of democracy, has received rather scant attention on this front. In his essay, Phillips goes further than those surface explorations of the resonances between Deleuze and queer theory by arguing for an unexplored chain of equivalence between (at least) three entities: Deleuze's understanding of difference (and his queer ontology of becoming); Rancière's understanding of disagreement (and his queer concept of the miscount); and the current political understanding of queer. Phillips' argument moves in three steps. First, he shows that queerness is contingent and not assimilable to a certain kind of identity politics (the type that Chambers criticizes).[9] Second, he demonstrates that Rancière's disagreement stems from the partitioning of the sensible in which the miscounted have no part. Third, he uses Deleuze's concept of the virtual to point to the potentiality for those without a part in the political order to disrupt it. Phillips claims that Rancière's democratic politics *actualizes* the queer virtuality already to be discerned in Deleuze's concept of pure difference. This futural time as described by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* is pure difference, pure temporality untethered to identity, to the subject.

If Phillips's is a torquing argument that produces an unlikely alliance, or fold of friendship, between Deleuze and Rancière, then Stamp's is a twisting argument that queers Rancière's relationship to figures with whom he is close (Derrida and Foucault) and yet often only nearly-proximate. Stamp asserts that Rancière's political thinking owes much to Derridean deconstruction, even though Rancière distances himself both from Derrida's so-called ethical turn (Rancière, 2009e) and, in particular, from the Derridean temporality of the democracy *a-venir* (to-come).[12] However, when it comes to the question of friendship and equality, Stamp, perhaps unsurprisingly, suggests that it is Foucault whom Rancière is closer to (see also May, 2007a). As Todd May reminds us, it was Foucault in his lectures on governmentality in the late 1970s who first discussed the term policing as a 'broader set of practices concerned to do [*sic*] with the health of the state' (May,

2008b: 41). Rancière himself, in an interview with Peter Hallward, admits that he has 'read Derrida with interest but from a certain distance, from a slightly out-of-kilter perspective' but that 'if, among the thinkers of my generation, there was one I was quite close to at one point, it was Foucault' (Rancière, 2003b: 208-9). In particular he cites Foucault's earlier archaeological project as influential on his thinking. But, just as Phillips surprises by choosing *Difference and Repetition* as a key text for queering Rancière, Stamp surprises by positing that it is the *late* Foucault on *asceticism* and friendship as a way of turning oneself into a work of art that actualizes a queer virtuality in Rancière's conception of the police order and the invention of unanticipated new modes of relationality.

Finally, Patricia MacCormack uses Rancière's work, particularly *On the Shores of Politics*, to locate a position for 'queer' beyond the human, fashioning in the process what she calls a 'jubilant ethics.' This experiment allows her, then, to argue for an ethical shift from queer understood as a political term to queer considered as a term of art. Rancière's 'corporealized politics' or his politics of disincorporated subjects is a space of excesses (*outrances*), evanescence, intermittence (Gibson, 2005, 2006) and of in-betweens (in between desire and the emancipated spectator). If for Phillips and Stamp, Rancière's politics actualizes a queer virtuality, then for MacCormack, his corporeal politics, his flesh of words, actualizes a queer theory that 'takes representations of subjectivity and sexuality away from centralized positions into a dissipative multiplicity' (see also MacCormack, 2008). In his afterword to the collection Adrian Rifkin meditates at some length upon our title 'Jacques Rancière on the Shores of Queer Theory.' In *On the Shores of Politics* (1995) Rancière discusses Plato's opposition between, on the one hand, the *terra firma* of the *arkhe*, the place where the philosopher philosophizes, where the warrior defends the city, and where the worker works and serves, and, on the other, the an-archic, stormy seas associated with democracy (Labelle, 2001). If the *demos* can ultimately be kept on the shores of politics, away from the *terra firma*, then, perhaps – to twist the metaphor again – we should move away from centralized positions (queer as institutionalized theory on *terra firma*) back to the stormy sea where it 'smells of democracy' (Rancière, 1995: 2). Rancière, then, finally, on the insurgent seas of queer theory.

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We would like to thank all our contributors, not just for warming to the task of queering Rancière but for staging an encounter that far exceeded our initial vision. We are especially grateful to Jacques Rancière for his encouragement and for his support of this project. Perhaps our greatest debt is to our anonymous external reviewers whose careful critical work quite simply makes this issue possible. Our thanks go also to Vijay Devadas at *Borderlands* who shared our initial excitement. Finally, we would like to express our deep gratitude to Kristen Phillips for putting the final touches to the special issue – not to mention her patience.

Notes

1. On the importance of staging in Rancière's work see Hallward (2006) and Bayly (2009). Hallward critically anatomizes a theatocratic dimension to Rancière's conception of equality; he sets out from the assertion that 'perhaps the most fundamental, and illuminating, dimension of Rancière's anarchic conception of equality is that which relates to theatre – in both the literal and metaphorical senses of the term' (Hallward, 2006: 110).

2. This short text on Foucault is discussed by Oliver Davis in this issue. A translation by Richard Stamp, a commentary by Sam Chambers and Michael O'Rourke, and a response from Jacques Rancière are forthcoming in *Theory & Event* (2010).

3. As Deranty helpfully points out, the French *tort* comes from the Latin *torquere* meaning twisted, athwart (2003a: 154). The existence of both Torquere Press (publisher of Gay and Lesbian literature) and *Torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association* certainly suggests some sort of connection between *torquere* and *queer*. The etymological evidence, however, proves somewhat thin: the English 'queer' derives from many possible sources, but neither the *OED* nor other Etymology Dictionaries suggest a direct link back from *queer* to the Latin *torquere*. The *OED* traces *queer* back to the Latin *querere*, a word that sounds like *torquere* but remains distinct. And the *Online Etymology Dictionary* derives *queer* from the pan-Indo-European *twerk*, which means to turn or to twist and is 'related to thwart' (etymonline, 2009). The English

thwart, of course, does derive from *torquere*, and there is no doubt that thwarting has been of great interest to Rancière, particularly in his recent *Film Fables* (2006a: 1-19). In his *Theory of the Subject*, Alain Badiou deploys the words *torsion* and *torsade*, *torsion* and *twist*, to describe the ways in which 'the subject works back upon the structure that determines it in the first place' (Badiou, 2009b: xxxvi).

4. For more on Berlant and Rancière see: <http://ranciere.blogspot.com/2008/04/supervalent-secrets-berlant-and-ranciere.html>

5. Recently, Andrew Parker (with Janet Halley) has co-edited an important special number of *South Atlantic Quarterly* posing the question 'After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory' (2007) where a number of prominent and emerging queer theorists are asked to reflect on what in their work is *non-sexual*. Rancière doesn't figure much in the pages of that issue (the exception is Lauren Berlant's 'Starved' where she briefly mentions Rancière on ellipsis and Althusser). But the possibilities Rancière offers (as Parker so lovingly delineates in the quotation above) for an anti-identitarian queer theory that is not *just* about sex/ sexual acts but that might have something to say about world politics right now are obvious.

6. For a much more detailed rationale for the present issue see: <http://ranciere.blogspot.com/2007/12/ranciere-and-queer-theory-some-further.html>

7. We are well aware that the corpus of works addressed here is limited and that much remains to be done by queer theorists with, for example, *The Names of History* (1994), *Hatred of Democracy* (2006b), and *The Future of The Image* (2007), not to mention the works yet to be translated into English on Mallarmé, on the politics of literature and on psychoanalysis.

8. The French text reads: 'Je ne connais pas très bien la littérature queer, mais je pense qu'elle n'est pas sans lien avec ce que j'essaie de faire, même si je ne me suis pas occupé de la question de la construction sexuelle, qui est au couer de la question queer. Une revue [this special issue of *borderlands*] veut confronter la théorie queer avec mes écrits. Le programme est de metre plus de Rancière dans le pensee queer et plus de queer dans la pensée de Rancière {*rires*}. In response to the question as to whether this interests him he replies, laughing again: 'Oui. Mais le courant queer peut devenir aussi une forme d'identification. En cela, le dialogue peut être intéressant. Donc, voilà, j'attends d'être queerisé' {*rires*} (Rancière, 2008: 29).

9. On queer optimism see Snediker (2009). The positions taken up in Sara Ahmed's special issue of *new formations* on queer happiness continue to polarize the field into the queer optimists and the queer pessimists. But there are some thinkers who manage to stage a dialectic between the two positions: Heather Love (2007/2008) for

example. On hope, hopelessness, and politics see Jose Esteban Muñoz (2009) and the dialogue between Muñoz and Lisa Duggan (2009).

10. On the points of contact and significant differences between Badiou and Rancière see Van den Hemel (2008), Read (2007), Deranty (2003b), Badiou (2005: 107-23), Badiou (2009a: 560-61), Rancière (2004a).

11. On contingency and Rancière's discussions of politics and democracy see Jodi Dean (2009).

12. On the ethical turn generally see Rancière (2006c, 2009a). On 'a plurality of times' see Rancière 'After what' (1991a). Rancière disagrees with Michael Dillon's reading of his disjointed time in his response to the special issue of *Theory & Event* on his work (Dillon, 2003; Rancière, 2003a; see also Dillon, 2005). On the connection between Derrida and Rancière see Robson (2009) and Parker (2004) where he says that 'Rancière's differences from Derrida are as significant as their similarities' (xvii). It will be clear that almost all our contributors share our understanding of Rancière as a thinker of the future to-come.

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