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Rancière and Film

Edited by Paul Bowman

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What Does It Mean to Call Film an Art?

Nico Baumbach

The origins of this essay derive from the attempt to make sense of a certain resistance to Jacques Rancière's work that I have encountered at film studies conferences in the United States. As I see it, this resistance can be traced to what is seen as a tension or contradiction between Rancière as the self-proclaimed amateur advocating for universal equality on the one hand, and what are perceived as the trappings of cultural distinction that mark his writings on cinema on the other – specifically the familiar auteurist pantheon that makes up the films he focuses on and, perhaps more significantly, the fact that he discusses cinema as an art.

To the extent that American academic film studies has been concerned with the egalitarian or democratic potential of cinema, it tends to insist on the separation of film from the category of art especially insofar as the category of art is thought to derive from the discourse of aesthetics as it emerged in German Idealist philosophy. In the US, until recently, studying film in terms of art or aesthetics tended to persist only in more traditional departments that emphasize either film appreciation or formalist analysis and reject the more explicitly political forms of film theory and criticism that helped establish the field in the 1970s and 80s by foregrounding class, race, gender and sexuality. But increasingly aesthetics is making a comeback, as are other methods of inquiry of the sort that might once have been thought to have been outmoded by the more cutting-edge currents in critical theory and cultural studies. Today it is not rare for theory and cultural studies to be perceived as outmoded, as humanities departments seek methodological (and financial) support from the sciences and a foundation that is not marred by the taint of politics.

It is perhaps symptomatic of this state of affairs that even within more theoretically and politically inclined enclaves of film

studies, the question I have encountered more than once in relation to Rancière's work is how do we *use* Rancière? What are the practical applications of his claims or theories? I have attempted to take the question seriously and apply it directly to the question of teaching. How and why might we teach Rancière or how might Rancière influence the way we teach cinema? This question necessarily splits into two because it means confronting both Rancière's writings on film but also on pedagogy in general. In thinking directly about not only how we might teach Rancière, but also how Rancière's work might allow us to think differently about teaching film in general, I hope to address this question of why Rancière's ways of thinking about film as an art are often met with resistance from people who might otherwise be most receptive to his project. The goal of this essay, then, is not simply to explain how we might resolve this perceived tension in Rancière's work, but rather to use the tension between Rancière's work and certain preconceived ideas in US film studies to look more closely at what it means to teach film as an art or not as an art. I take it that, if Rancière's work is useful to us in Anglo-American film studies in any way, it is not because he solves any of our problems. On the contrary, he creates new ones that may be useful to us precisely because they don't allow for as easy solutions as the old ones.

Before discussing what lessons we might draw from Rancière about how to teach film in particular, a few words about Rancière on pedagogy in general are in order. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* Rancière confronts the reader with a series of propositions about intelligence, equality and instruction that may make professors rethink the value of appearing in front of the room as experts who presume to provide access to knowledge that we have and that our students do not. Methods of teaching that take the goal of study and the proof of intelligence to be the progressive acquisition of knowledge and skills through a determinate method are one example of what Rancière calls 'stultification'.¹ This stultification is redoubled by the idea that this progress is realized not just through the student's encounter with texts, but through the mediation of the professor who is necessary to lead the student on the path to knowledge. The ignorant gain knowledge through the mediation of one who counts as knowledgeable by virtue of the authority of a degree and an institution, and the transmission is thought somehow to require the physical bodily presence of the master for it to take place.

In opposition to this logic, Rancière, following the forgotten nineteenth-century French pedagogue Joseph Jacotot, offers the slogan of intellectual emancipation: everyone is equally intelligent. Similar sounding claims – while they may not have much place in institutions of higher learning – are not necessarily uncommon. We often hear that everyone is intelligent in his or her own way, that all opinions are equally valid, or the relativistic claim that there are multiple intelligences that are merely different with no criteria to evaluate their differences. But this is not what Rancière (or Jacotot) means by the equality of intelligence. He does not mean that we each have equal capacity, whereas some of us have just had less chance to exercise it, because this reinstates the logic of progress which places some in the position of having knowledge that others are expected to acquire. He means that there is, as he puts it, ‘a single intelligence’ to be affirmed axiomatically. There is only one intelligence because intelligence in the ‘opinion’ of the ignorant master has no meaning outside the verification of the equality of intelligence. As he puts it, ‘Equality was not an end to attain, but a point of departure, a supposition to maintain in every circumstance’ (1991: 138). At no point should a hierarchy be instated between one who knows and one who doesn’t. The consequence of this logic is that one cannot teach what one knows; one can only teach what one doesn’t know. As Jacotot realized, this idea of intellectual equality could not be converted into a method that could be institutionalized without undermining its very principle. Ultimately, Rancière tells us, ‘he refused all progressive and pedagogical translation of emancipatory equality’ (1991: 134). It would seem that to be an emancipated pedagogue is not to be employable.

Rancière’s 2004 lecture ‘The Emancipated Spectator’² sought a link between the idea of pedagogy preached by Jacotot and discourses about theatrical spectatorship. ‘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. To this identity of cause and effect, which is at the heart of stultifying logic, emancipation counter-poses their dissociation’ (Rancière 2009a: 14). In other words, the theatrical spectacle that seeks to show spectators how to become active is analogous to the master explicator who guides the student to knowledge. Focusing specifically on the theatre itself as *dispositif* and not on the teaching of theatre, let alone film, the

essay is nonetheless readily adaptable to a commentary on the pedagogue who teaches cinematic spectatorship. The film professor can show the student that what she saw is not what she thought she saw, that what she felt is not what she should have felt. Proper access to the film is only by way of a professor who becomes a gatekeeper, either confirming the ways of seeing prescribed by the film or thwarting them – showing how the film doesn’t say what it thinks it says. The egalitarian inversion, it might be argued, is to affirm the equal validity of all students’ responses as somehow more authentic than the resentment-fuelled interpretation of academics and critics. But the authenticity of the experience of the ones who don’t know compared to the inauthenticity of knowledge in the hands of disciplinary power again presupposes two different intelligences and reinstates another hierarchy. How do we get out of this deadlock?

The answer comes through recognizing that the professor/student relationship is not binary; rather, between the professor and the student there are written texts and, specific to our topic, films. And in this case, rather than teaching how to read and write a new language (as Jacotot did), the kinds of knowledge and skills to be acquired in a film studies class are less defined in advance. This is often a source of anxiety for those invested in demonstrating that film studies is a legitimate discipline, but we might see it as an opportunity rather than a problem that needs to be solved. So rather than asking directly how we might think of a teaching method in general in such a way as to avoid reproducing this relationship of hierarchy, and then get to cinema, I’d like to look at things the other way around and ask whether there is an approach to cinema that may allow us to think about what it might mean to teach in a way that allows for intellectual emancipation. How can the professor use cinema to teach the student and herself about equality?

Here we can turn to Rancière’s writings on cinema. Whatever may be new or surprising or emancipatory about Rancière’s approach to film in his two books devoted exclusively to cinema, *La Fable cinématographique* (2001) and *Les Écarts du cinéma* (2011), he seems to reproduce a familiar canon common to the intellectual cinephile that we might tie back to the old Henri Langlois Cinemateque and *Cahiers du cinéma* up through Deleuze (see Rancière 2001a; 2006c; 2011c). This line arrived in modified form in the US by way of Andrew Sarris’s *American Cinema*,

which provided a hierarchical taxonomy of auteurs adapted from the lessons of *Cahiers*. In both the American and French contexts, Hollywood was central and it should be remembered that claiming cultural and artistic status for a mass medium and authorship for directors working within the rigid confines of a commercial studio system was itself a challenge to certain currents of mainstream intellectual snobbery that refused to admit that film was on a par with the more traditional arts or saw only more literary or socially conscious (and typically foreign) films as worthy of serious consideration. Sarris's 1968 book exhibits the ambivalent relation to cultural distinction of the emergent cinephile intellectual culture with its marked rebellious spirit in elevating certain B-movie genre films over prestige films of more obvious artistic pedigree, while at the same time dismissing 'the pernicious frivolities of pop, camp, and trivia' (Sarris 1968: 15). It helped to codify for an American audience the tradition of cinephilic taste that can no longer be thought to be on the margins, a variation of which can be found in Rancière's choice of films. It connects the auteurs of classical Hollywood celebrated by *Cahiers* in the 1950s (Rancière writes on Nicholas Ray, Anthony Mann, Vincent Minnelli and the American films of Fritz Lang) to the significant precursors to the kind of modernist filmmaking represented by the *Cahiers* critics when they became filmmakers at the end of the 50s and became known collectively as the French New Wave (Roberto Rossellini, Robert Bresson are two prominent examples that Rancière writes on) to the films of the New Wave filmmakers themselves (Rancière writes on Godard, Rohmer and Marker) to the more formalist radical filmmaking celebrated by *Cahiers* following its post-68 theoretical turn and the contemporary filmmakers indebted to this tradition whose work is rarely seen or promoted outside of international film festivals (Rancière writes on Jean-Marie Straub, Béla Tarr and Pedro Costa). Rancière's choice of objects and broadly auteurist and largely text-based approach might suggest that he reproduces the hackneyed model of French intellectual cinephilia that was given a withering feminist critique by Geneviève Sellier in her book *Masculine Singular: French New Wave Cinema* (2008).

The complex histories of French and American cinephilia are beyond the scope of this essay. What I wish to highlight here is the extent to which the success of this tradition has coincided with the acceptance of film as an art. Sellier, in her critique of the culture of French cinephilia, takes inspiration from English-language gender

studies that she argues have been effectively ignored or marginalized in France, where a highbrow culture invested in a universal (and gender-neutral) concept of art still dominates (Sellier 2010: 103–12). In the US, by contrast, a common cinephile complaint is that American academia ignores film as an art on behalf of social or political categories such as class, race and gender (see Bordwell 2011; see also my response to Bordwell: Baumbach 2012).

In the 1930s Walter Benjamin famously proposed that the question should not be whether film and photography are arts, but whether they have changed the very nature of art (Benjamin 2008: 28). While today few would dispute film's claim to be 'an art', what is meant by this tends to remain remarkably vague. To confuse matters, 'art' has in many arenas (not least the academic discipline of art history) continued to be associated with what appears on museum walls or, in other words, with the idea of art that Benjamin thought was disappearing, and not film or even (with some exceptions) music, drama, literature or poetry. Given this semantic confusion, the question should be not only whether the category of art is applicable to the study of film, but also what is meant by art and how is film understood when it is not understood as an art.

Therefore, to further pursue the question of what Rancière might tell us about cinema that can help us think about teaching; I'd like to start by asking not what films we might teach but first what we might *teach film as*. I'll address this question by way of two sub-questions: first, if we do not teach films as art what do we teach them as? And secondly, what are the different ways that film gets taught as art?

In regards to what we can *teach film as* if not art, two possibilities present themselves. To be clear, these two possibilities do not necessarily preclude also seeing some films as art, as I will explain below, and they are not always necessarily mutually exclusive, but nonetheless they are common relatively distinct ways of identifying film as something other than art.

1) The first category I'll propose is seeing film *as ideology*. I use the word ideology as shorthand here, but in this category I wish to include seeing film as 'commodity' as well as seeing film as 'myth' in the Roland Barthes sense, while acknowledging that neither commodity nor myth are strictly equivalent to ideology. Nonetheless, what unites this category is the logic of demystification or the

'hermeneutics of suspicion', an approach that Rancière has criticized for reproducing the position of mastery and the logic of inequality (see Rancière 2004b: 50).

One needs to be careful here, of course, because Barthes did not wish to conceive of myth as something that could be unveiled, and we might add that this is true of much of the more sophisticated forms of ideology critique, especially that derived from Louis Althusser's concept of ideology, which takes ideology as an a priori condition of daily life not to be confused with false consciousness (see 'Myth Today' in Barthes 2012; and Althusser 1971). The 'hermeneutics of suspicion' as defined by Paul Ricoeur, which starts with Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, has from the very beginning been suspicious of the hermeneutics of suspicion itself (Ricoeur 1970: 32–6). Nonetheless, the tradition of ideology critique must retain the notion that theory can say something that the film itself cannot – that, as Laura Mulvey put it, theory can be 'a political weapon' against the unreflective pleasures offered by film (Mulvey 1986: 198). Or as Metz put it, theory can wrest film from the imaginary and win it for the symbolic (Metz 1982: 3). Seeing film as ideology presumes that film is first an imaginary or idealist phenomenon and that one can extract meaning from the text of the film that it simultaneously contains and seeks to obscure.

2) The second way of seeing film as something that is not art I will call seeing film *as culture*. By this I mean asking how film or films function culturally without necessarily treating them as ideology that needs to be demystified or art that needs to be appreciated. I do not intend this category to be strictly correlative to the work done on film by writers and academics that identify with the tradition of cultural studies, but obviously there is overlap. By seeing film as culture I mean a way of seeing film that is committed to retaining as its object the ordinary ways that films are received and experienced without (necessarily) denouncing or unveiling them on the one hand, or championing them on the other. It means a way of approaching films less in terms of how meaning inheres within the film text than in terms of how films take on or acquire meanings.

I'd now like to turn to the different ways of seeing film as art. The first way I'll call the *Romantic Model*, though it has certain variants that may sound more modernist than romantic.³ The paradoxical logic is the following: film is an art like any other, that is, the seventh art, because film is an art like no other. In other words, I want to say that the logic behind the titles of both

Rudolph Arnheim's *Film as Art* and V.F. Perkins's *Film as Film* would fall into this category (Arnheim 1957; Perkins 1972). In this model not all films are art and teaching films as art means teaching representative masterpieces to show how they use the specificity of the medium to transcend the medium.

The second model I'll call the *Utilitarian Model*. We could also call it the poetic model, not in the sense of romantic poetics, but because it sees art as *poiesis* or in terms of ways of doing or making. Here I am thinking of the popular American textbook *Film Art* by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. Bordwell and Thompson insist that when they refer to film art, pedigree is not an issue. They are using a concept of art that does not require transcendence, but rather acknowledges the wide variety of types of films and audiences. Cinema is an art, they tell us, because it offers filmmakers ways to 'design' experiences that viewers find 'worthwhile' or 'valuable'. They tell us that we can analyse cinema as an art because it is an intentional formal construct (Bordwell and Thompson 2008: xviii, 2–3). The criteria for art are then three things: a) analysable form – patterns are discernible as are innovations within available patterns; b) authorship – the effects of these formal constructs they tell us are not accidental; we analyse cinema as art because we attribute design or intention to it; c) identifiable positive effects – effects that Bordwell and Thompson call 'worthwhile' or 'valuable', though these adjectives are left vague because they are meant to encompass an enormous range of effects. What is key in this model is that art is not pure means, but has identifiable ends.

The third category I propose is what I'll call the *Didactic Model* of film art. This category is meant to be a supplement to the category that sees film as primarily ideology. In that model film can become political when it becomes art or vice versa. Art is understood here in an avant-garde or political modernist sense as that which breaks from film as ideology.⁴ Those who teach film as ideology often reserve film's power as art to its critical capacity, its politics. Political film is not film about politics but film that uses film form to disturb our normal relation to film through what Althusser called a knowledge-effect. This argument is perhaps most explicit in Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni's seminal 1969 essay 'Cinema/Criticism/Ideology' (Comolli and Narboni 2009), and it can also be found in many of the most influential essays published in the British journal *Screen* in the 1970s.

The fourth category I'll call the *Sociological Model*. It corresponds to the category that sees film as culture. As I suggested, seeing film as culture goes against seeing film in general as art, but what it recognizes is the *art effect* of a certain category of film. It is from this category that we get not the syntagm 'film art', but that of 'art film', which is to say that 'art' when applied to film refers not to its practice in general or its exceptional instances but is more like a genre or mode of film practice with a specific institutional history and specifiable codes and conventions that appeal to a specific elite cultural milieu. According to this model we can read film as art only to the extent that it circulates as art. This category need not be evaluative but it is available for the Bourdieuan critique of discourses about art cinema or the 'festival film' and so on.

This leads us to our fifth category of seeing or teaching film as art, which after Rancière I will call the *Aesthetic Model*. What the other models all share is a logic that assumes that the operations of art have specifiable effects. Like the ignorant master, the emancipated idea of art dissociates cause and effect. What aesthetics means in Rancière's analysis is the suspension of the rules of appearance that define the difference between art and non-art. But the suspension of those rules is not their overcoming. Art in the aesthetic regime is art to the extent that it thrives on an ambiguity or paradox and here lie both its limitations and its egalitarian dimension.

Rancière does not wish to defend aesthetic theory as a specific discipline or branch of philosophy engaged in the science of the beautiful, but rather to return to the original paradoxical construction of the term to combat the ways in which the critique of aesthetics (like the institutionalized concept of aesthetics it is rightfully against) has been in the service of the neutralization of the politics of aesthetics. He agrees with certain critics of aesthetics that he is otherwise arguing against when he claims that "Art" is not the common concept that unifies the different arts. It is the *dispositif* that renders them visible' (Rancière 2009b: 23). But he emphasizes the political dimension of the modern *dispositif* of art over and against its domestication in modernist *doxa*. To think of film as art in the aesthetic sense as advocated by Rancière is to tie it back to the history of a form of experience of sensible being that is not strictly equivalent to its function as an object of culture or ideology, even if it is imbricated with these functions. The significance of understanding film as art in this sense is not simply a rescuing

of film for art against its debasement as mere entertainment, but also a rescuing of art from its impoverishment as being understood as merely a mark of cultural distinction. Rancière's investigations into regimes of art have consistently disclosed that the history of modern art in what he calls the 'aesthetic regime' does not leave us with an either/or decision between art's sovereignty and autonomy on the one hand or the dissolution of art at the hands of culture, technology, media or commodity on the other. Cinema emerges in a moment in which it can be recognized as art, because art has already been understood as something which does not specify its intentions or effects, and to understand it in this context is to revive its egalitarian potential.

As discussed, Rancière rejects the Didactic Model, but not for the same reasons that it is rejected by the other models we have discussed. The logic of demystification it follows has typically been directed at film's commodity character and the critique of it has been to affirm cinema as a popular cultural form. If the professor is to refuse the role of master who explains to students what they should have seen in the film he has shown them – which is to say either its ideology or its art – then he should, it would seem, embrace the cinema that already speaks to the student. This is the approach of the Sociological Model that tends to assume that what is already familiar and available to the student will invariably condition what the student is capable of appreciating.

It is time to return to what is particularly mystifying about Rancière to many in Anglo-American film studies: how is it that someone on the left insisting on the interdependence of aesthetics and politics today can defend the Kantian idea of disinterested taste against Pierre Bourdieu's critique of 'distinction' – of the way that the bourgeois idea of universal judgement masks the forms of domination exercised by cultural capital? Rancière argues,

Aesthetic experience eludes the sensible distribution of roles and competences which structures the hierarchical order. The sociologist would like this to be nothing more than the illusion of the philosopher, who believes in the disinterested universality of judgments concerning the beautiful, since it ignores the conditions which determine the tastes and the manner of being of the worker. (Rancière 2006c: 4)

But as Rancière discovered through the journals of workers, this 'ignoring' is not only the privilege of the philosopher or the petit

bourgeois aesthete but of the worker himself. And it is not a lack of knowledge, but a suspension of it; it is a refusal of the idea that only the bourgeois is capable of aesthetic pleasure, a refusal that is denied by the sociologist who insists on the power of knowledge to expose all aesthetic pleasure as illusion and to deny it to the worker. The scientific critique of institutional power reproduces that power by insisting that any deviation from its efficacy be seen as only an illusion.

In *The Nights of Labor*, Rancière quotes the journal of a worker during the era of the 1848 Revolution: 'Believing 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 the 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' (Rancière 1989: 81). This evidence of the worker's aesthetic reflection is not so much an appeal to the authenticity of worker experience against the academic attempt to define it for him in advance. Rather it is more complicated because it challenges equally Rancière's attempt to find an authentic worker's discourse; the worker's discourse, as he discovered it, defied what it was supposed to be. The worker's experience of the work that goes into creating the home of the one who hires him is meant to expose the lie of the kind of disinterested appreciation that is supposed to be made possible only by the luxury of ignoring the labour that went into it. For Rancière, this example signifies the way that aesthetics can mean a displacement of the idea that there is a discourse proper to the worker and another discourse proper to the man of leisure. What interests Rancière about this example is not the universality of aesthetic sensibility, which speaks even to a lowly worker, but rather how aesthetics – in a specifically modern sense – can mean the suspension of the distinction between those who are condemned to work with their hands and those who have the luxury to live the life of the mind.

This point re-emerges in the final essay of Rancière's most recent collection of writings on cinema, *Les Écarts du cinéma*. In the essay entitled 'Politique de Pedro Costa', Rancière describes a scene in Costa's *Colossal Youth* (2006) in which Ventura, an immigrant labourer from Cape Verde and a denizen of the slums of Lisbon, is seen walking through a museum that we learn later was where he suffered an accident while working on its construc-

tion. Here it is not a question of the worker admiring the paintings on the wall, participating in the kind of disinterested reflection thought specific to the privileged classes, but nor is it a question of aesthetic sensibility being denied to the worker. The paintings on the museum walls echo the still lives Costa's camera has made out of the light and arrangements of objects in Ventura's run-down home. What Costa's film reveals, Rancière argues, is the richness of Ventura's world, and the failure of the museum is its stinginess in this respect. It does not, like Costa's film itself, offer 'an art commensurate with the experience of these travelers, an art that emerged from them and which they themselves can enjoy' (Rancière 2006e). The museum is indicted not because its grandeur contrasts with the misery of the inhabitants of the slums but, on the contrary, because it withholds and limits its idea of art, whereas Ventura's everyday world displays the beauty, grandeur and sensory richness of art understood in a more expansive and generous way. As Rancière argues,

This politics is a stranger to that politics which works by bringing to the screen the state of the world to make viewers aware of the structures of domination in place and inspire them to mobilize their energies . . . The politics here, rather, is about thinking the proximity between art and all those other forms which can convey the affirmation of a sharing [*partage*] or shareable [*partageable*] capacity. (Rancière 2006e)

The politics of the film is, then, not simply its stance on oppression, on the economic and political history that is responsible for the miserable conditions of those living on the margins of society. The politics is rather found in a politics of aesthetics or a politics of cinema, which means a different way of looking at the world and the experience of a group of individuals whose lives and environment are typically only shown to signify misery and incapacity.

Rancière continues:

The politics here is about being able to return what can be extracted of sensible wealth – the power of speech, or of vision – from the life and decorations of these precarious existences back to them, about making it available to them, like a song they can enjoy, like a love letter whose words and sentences they can borrow for their own love lives. Isn't that, after all, what we can expect from the cinema, the popular art

of the twentieth century, the art that allowed the greatest number of people – people who would not walk into a museum – to be thrilled by the splendor of the effect of a ray of light shining on an ordinary setting, by the poetry of clinking glasses or of a conversation on the counter of any old diner? (Rancière 2006e)

He poses the last line as a question for a reason, because Costa's films are not shown in multiplexes, and to the cinephiles who discover them at small international film festivals or acquire the DVDs after reading about them in *Artforum* (or in a book by a French philosopher) they are not recognizable as examples of what most people think of when they think of movies as a popular egalitarian art accessible to everyone. Pedro Costa, perhaps not unlike his protagonist Ventura, seeking to do justice to the singular worlds of individuals not usually granted access to the media and attempting to make that world shareable, becomes, in Rancière's words, something of 'a sad monk' confined to the ghetto of the art world. As films are increasingly made and marketed to particular demographics, to make a film for anyone is perhaps to make a film for no one.

Here again we come up against the ironic history of film's relation to art. To claim that a Chaplin film was art could be seen as a democratization of art. According to Benjamin, Chaplin's films, unlike modern painting, were experienced by the masses in terms of 'an immediate, intimate fusion of pleasure – pleasure in seeing and experiencing – with an attitude of expert appraisal' (Benjamin 2008: 36). But at the same time as cinephilia claimed for art the egalitarian pleasures of mass entertainment, it also became available for a new code of distinction that drew divisions between the auteurs who count and those who do not, the knowing cinephiles and the ordinary mass of fans. As knowing the difference between the right and wrong Hollywood auteurs became a sign of cinephilic distinction, soon cinephilia also became associated with the kind of highbrow culture it once stood against. Nonetheless, as Rancière's essay on Pedro Costa attests, the same way that films for the masses can be claimed as art, so too can so-called art films be claimed for the masses. Rancière's stance on cinephilia corresponds to his stance on aesthetics – to read within its paradoxical discourse for its egalitarian dimension and to indict the indictment of it that attempts to close off its possibility by reifying its most problematic exemplars.

In *Les Écartés du cinéma*, he champions 'la politique de l'amateur' – a play on 'la politique des auteurs' – the term used by Truffaut that once set the agenda for the cinephilic cause (Rancière 2011c: 14). The position of the amateur can be adopted by the professor as well as the fan. By dissociating cause and effect, the policy of the amateur allows films to participate in a shared inquiry into ways of making, watching and thinking about the combination of moving images and sounds and by extension ways of seeing, saying, acting and being in the world. The Aesthetic Model, as I have called it for the purposes of this essay, means teaching film as art and teaching art as something available to anyone.

Notes

1. See *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*: 'The new explication – progress – has inextricably confused equality with its opposite. The task to which republican hearts and minds are devoted is to make an equal society out of unequal men, to reduce inequality indefinitely' (Rancière 1991: 133).
2. The lecture became the title essay of a book published in French in 2008 and translated into English in 2009.
3. Rancière has argued that so-called modernism is an especially restrictive interpretation of a new way of understanding art in what he calls 'the aesthetic regime of art' that goes back to at least the late eighteenth century and includes the history of Romanticism (see Rancière 2004b: 10–11).
4. For many examples of this logic in 1970s film theory see Rodowick (1994).