

68 + 1: LACAN'S *ANNÉE ÉROTIQUE*

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*Gainsbourg et son Gainsborough  
 Vont rejoindre Paris  
 Ils ont laissé derrière eux  
 La Tamise et Chelsea  
 Ils s'aiment et la traversée  
 Durera toute une année  
 Et que les dieux les bénissent  
 Jusqu'en soixante-dix*

*Soixant-neuf année érotique  
 Soixant-neuf année érotique*

In a presentation on “Identity in a time of loneliness” at a recent Lacanian conference on the topic of “Love” (Philadelphia, 03/29/2008), the Belgian theoretician of Lacanian psychoanalysis and clinician Paul Verhaeghe cited documentaries on May '68 as signs of a huge change that he saw in our perception not only of mentalities but of bodies. These were his terms:

Recently a famous television documentary, *In Europe*, by Geert Mak, showed us images of the previous century, e.g., of the student protests in the late sixties. Even in color, the black, grey and white dominate. We have to assume that the marching men are in their early twenties, but they all look much older. Moreover, they don't seem very healthy and their body shapes are not very appealing either. This comes as no surprise, as their main sporting activity came down to debating evenings with lots of cigarettes and alcohol. Their identity was based on the position provided by their studies in combination with the fact that they belonged to a number of other classic groups as well.

Half a century later, this has completely changed. The majority of the students are female, colour is everywhere and almost everybody (professors included) is following a fitness program. The latter goes for about everybody in the West: the body takes the central scene in a way that was not so long ago literally unthinkable. It has to meet a number of compelling norms (young and beautiful, sexy and provocative), and in cases where fitness, body sculpting and diet don't help anymore, there is always plastic surgery.

The rational explanation for this change is that our times recognize health as represented by a pleasant appearance. The less rational explanation is that this is a desperate way to be “some-body” so as to get recognition. If the symbolic determination of the subject is increasingly disappearing because the groups that founded this determination are disappearing, then we are left with two possibilities. One

can start looking for new groups that might provide us with an identity. And/or one can fall back on the naked body, as a basis for an exchange with the others and for a position in that exchange. In both cases, the subject-to-be is desperately looking for a big Other who is willing to provide a story for his life, just like the six characters in the prophetic piece by Pirandello (“Six characters in search of an author”). (From the Introduction to a book in progress).

I can testify personally to the accuracy of Verhaeghe’s diagnosis, having laboured in my tender youth under the delusion that a revolutionary body should be marked by a refusal to align with the ideology of health that we left to “bourgeois” jocks, and ought to be distinguished by an intellectualism marked by smoking, drinking and spending heated nights discussing politics.

I even had the experience, as I was in charge of the ciné-club of the Ecole Normale Supérieure in 1973, of collecting as many documentaries on the May ‘68 “events” as I could find just five years after the thing itself. As we screened these amateur and professional documents in May 1973, being still on the premises where so much had taken place, it seemed to all of us that we were watching images from another century. We were literally amazed. In these few years, fashion had drastically changed: flower power had crossed the Channel and, like Gainsbourg and Jane Birkin, we were all wearing long hair, open shirts with garish colours, and many sported ear-rings, finger rings or otherwise weird leather hats and boots. We were amazed at the view of the studious cleanliness of the white shirts and the neat ties of Latin Quarter student leaders like Geismar or Sauvageot (Daniel Cohn-Bendit’s open collar was an exception, but he came from Germany). The ‘68 students had the looks of tired executives who have signed a desperate resolution, and their demeanour evoked William Burroughs’s paranoid executive style much more than the dizzy orientalism of the gurgled Beatles whom we had started aping... ‘69 *année érotique* indeed: had it boiled down to only this—a revolution in fashion, accompanied by the belated discovery of a new libidinal body?

Such might be the point of view of historians like Tony Judt, who in the end agreed with Raymond Aron’s diagnosis that it was just a “psychodrama” acted by the children of the bourgeoisie, based on a series of ideological confusions. The root would have been the decision by students of Nanterre to allow females into male dorms—then a quite unthinkable transgression in the paternalist order of de Gaulle’s hierarchical French society.

While noting that the students’ unrest in the sixties had a strong sexual component, I would not want to reduce its impact to a sudden “liberation” of the young privileged elite, a way for France and other European countries to catch up with international fashion marked by a Californian ethos of “Make love not war” that was slowly conquering the world of the baby-boom teenagers. This would mean in fact denying any political importance to the movement. Focusing on Lacan’s tiered and layered responses to May ‘68, I will try to show that a psychoanalytic reading is best equipped to do justice both to the libidinal component involved and to the political stakes implied—to the point that the very definition of “politics” has to be reevaluated.

This has to be done less in the spirit of commemoration than of political investigation. May ‘68 has returned forty years later, and in France a spate of books has marked the anniversary, but this has corresponded to an ongoing debate about the nefarious or positive influence of the dubious heritage of the ‘68 generation. While the Chirac government seemed unanimous in its condemnation of the legacy of these “events”, the new Sarkozy regime sounds less unanimous. But the former leftists are themselves divided. In a Television talk-show (“Ripostes”) on a French channel on March 2 2008, Alain Finkelkraut wanted to sweep it away all at once (“May ‘68 mistook the concept of authority for that of authoritarianism”). This for him triggered a wholesale trend of disrespect for traditional culture identified with authority. Happily, according to Finkelkraut, someone like Sarkozy had started restoring and rehabilitating authority. On the other hand, the very self-same Cohn-Bendit was more nuanced, arguing that Sarkozy would correspond to the decried type of a “soixante-huitard” who had succeeded. Sarkozy seemed to apply to the letter the famous ‘68 slogan: “Enjoy without fetters” (*Jour sans entraves*), taking vacations on millionaires’ yachts and flaunting his tryst with Carla Bruni. His free style of

constant improvisation might be glossed as the generalization of anarchist principles to the Elysée: his motto might be: “à l’Elysée, fais ce qu’il te plaît!” Is Sarkozy, a staunch ideological opponent of the ‘68 ideology, the most subtle proof of its pervasiveness and ultimate success? I’ll leave this issue pending. I’ll follow first Lacan’s complex reactions to the students’ unrest, then I will generalize from the conceptual models that he elaborated partly in response to the events, and with a decisive time-lag of one year which corresponds to the “time to conclude,” a logical time indeed.

## 1. LACAN’S 1968

The first sign of something like a disruption appears in Seminar XV, when on March 27<sup>th</sup> 1968, Lacan noted with obvious displeasure that many of his “seniors” and faithful auditors had not shown up. He blamed the poor show-up on impending vacations, university exams and a “thousand other factors.” He seemed oblivious to the fact that by that time most intellectuals in the Latin Quarter knew that unrest was brewing and were spending time discussing, plotting, and preparing tracts and actions. In a typical double bind, Lacan expressed both his relief that the small number could allow him to engage in personal discussion (which he set out to do, reading written questions by Soury and Rudrauf), and his annoyance. Quite petulantly, he said: “*J’espère qu’ils vont se pointer parce que j’aimerais qu’ils entrent en action. Mais s’ils ne sont pas là nous nous en passerons.*”<sup>1</sup>

The seminar had been devoted to a definition of the psychoanalytic “act” in which Lacan was groping toward a better formulation of the logic of sexualization. As the discussion period wound down, Lacan was still looking for his faithful retinue:

I would like, because I always have a scruple about making you go out of your way without you leaving with something in your knapsack, to try to take advantage of the fact that today we are an informal group. I insist—it is especially for me that this may be insulting, more than for anyone else—on the absence here of a certain number of people who at other moments are assiduous in attending what I am putting forward this year in the seminar. Why are they not here? Is it because perhaps I might have summoned them to respond in my place to what is being stated here? Who knows? We do not know. It is perhaps for that reason. It is perhaps also because they have a sense of economizing their time. So that if they believe they are going to find themselves fiddling around what I am stating here, once this is only an attempt at work, they think that they will not get enough benefit from it. Who knows, that is another possibility. In short, I deplore it.<sup>2</sup>

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We witness Lacan’s keen displeasure at the disappearance of his “old guard” of licensed analysts—he regarded the seminar as a collective workshop – and, by compensation, his need for reassurance from the younger generation. He was more and more relying on *Normaliens* like Nassif (often named in that session) and Jacques-Alain Miller to help him formalize his logical approach to sexuality. March 1968 was the date of the publication of the first issue of *Scilicet*, the notorious Lacanian review in which he alone was to sign his articles, the other contributors remaining anonymous. The disaffection of older psychoanalysts would lead to an important schism: as early in 1969, Jean-Paul Valabrega, Piera Aulagnier and the up-to-that-point-devoted François Perrier were to leave the school and found the Organisation Psychanalytique de Langue Française. This led Lacan to state a year later that those who understand him best were at the ideal age of 24! Roudinesco has well-described the tension that mounted in 1968-69 between the old guard of clinicians and the new group of “philosophers” who were all radical in their politics.<sup>3</sup> What’s revealing too is that Lacan’s unease facing an exceptionally poor attendance is soon rephrased as a worry about the content of his seminar. In the second half of this same seminar, he surveys the ground covered that year.

To do so, he offers a vignette culled from a male patient: having gone for a romantic week-end to a chalet with a new girl-friend he was in love with, he found himself unable to have sex. A common occurrence, no doubt, which sends Lacan on disquisitions about the mother/whore paradigm put forward by Freud on his text on the debasement of the object of love. But Lacan wonders whether there is any “naturalism” to be expected

in that situation; would it be natural that the man and the woman should be able to make love without any impediment?

Here is the question that I am raising. Why? Not at all to tell you things that are afterwards going to do the rounds of Paris, namely that what Lacan is teaching means that man and woman have nothing to do together (*rien à voir ensemble*). I am not teaching it; it is true. Textually, they have nothing to do together. It is annoying that I cannot teach this without giving rise to scandal. So then I do not teach it, I withdraw it.<sup>4</sup>

Lacan describes this as a paradox that would be similar in kind to the liar's paradox or to Russell's paradox of the sets that do not contain themselves. The scandal that such a paradox creates is only a scandal if one assumes that the naturalist frame of reference is the norm. Naturalism implies that men and women should "go together" – that is, have sex without any obstacle – and that anything different is a sign of disease. What is denied is that when a man thinks he loves the woman whom he takes to the chalet, to follow the same example, he loves in fact his mother, which will trigger the effect of castration. As for the woman, she has to struggle with the fact that she just stands for an object *a*. When an analyst states this he risks being rejected—and as Lacan insists, this is what usually marks the end of the treatment: the analyst is then seen by the patient as a piece of shit, and the analyst is promptly dumped.

I want to insist on this—contrary to what Dylan Evans states in his *Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, the first time that Lacan offered his formula "There is no sexual rapport" was not 1970,<sup>5</sup> since it was already there in his 1967 seminar on the "Logic of fantasy." True, earlier formulations tended to vary: Lacan stated that there is a lack in the junction of sexual rapport with its subjective realization (22 Febr. 1967), that there is no "complementarity" between the male and the female side in sexuality (1<sup>st</sup> March 1967), or on 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1967, more explicitly, that there is "no sexual act." "The great secret of psychoanalysis is that there is no sexual act." He added: "It is precisely because there is sexuality that there is no sexual act."<sup>6</sup> Here lay the new core of Lacan's teaching and he felt that this was revolutionary enough, even if it could not cause or serve the students' revolution—on the contrary!

Thus when Lacan states that this piece of news is a rumour throughout Paris, he is quoting his seminar from one year before: "I have formulated that "there is no sexual act." I believe that the news circulates in all the city, well, finally I didn't announce it as an absolute truth" (19 April 1967). It is in this seminar that Lacan begins articulating this "truth" with a Marxist analysis (or even Leninist: he quotes on 19 April 1967 Lenin's tag that "theory will triumph because it is true") that defines *jouissance* in the social field as caught up in surplus value. This would be the locus of the symptom. "Truth has no other form than the symptom."<sup>7</sup> Such is the general framework of the seminar—the 1967-68 seminar directly follows from these striking formulations about sexuality.

The seminar of May 8<sup>th</sup> did not take place because of a general strike called for by the teachers' union. Lacan came and just chatted with those who were present. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, Lacan signed a manifesto in support of protesting students, no doubt incited by his daughter and son in law, both involved in Maoist group activities. Lacan dealt with students in psychiatry who were on strike; even at the time, Lacan was never impressed by people arguing that they need more "dialogue" with the power, rejecting the very notion of dialogue. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, Lacan's school arranged a meeting with Cohn-Bendit and other leaders of the students' "contestation." The next day Lacan praised Cohn-Bendit's wit and ready retorts. This happened on May 15<sup>th</sup>, as Lacan did not really hold his seminar but came prepared with notes, since he knew that people would be there. He began by insisting that he was speaking (and working hard) for psychoanalysts, then mentioned signing open letters, in obvious reference to his own signature, as perhaps not being equal to what the turn of events was requesting of psychoanalysts. Lacan also praised the courage of those who stood up to the police, adding that it was their subjective positions that had changed:

Anyway, for the moment, to be worthy of the events, I would say that even though psychoanalysts bear witness to their sympathy for those caught up in pretty hard encounters, for which one needs to have—

this should be underlined—great courage, you should have received, as we analysts do, the testimony of what is experienced at these moments to measure better and at its true value what is represented by this courage. Because from the outside, like that, you can admire, of course, but you cannot always realize that the merit is no less great because these lads are really at certain moments carried away by the feeling of being absolutely bound to their comrades. They express it by saying that it is exalting to sing the International while being clubbed by police truncheons, but this is on the surface, since of course, the International may be a very fine song but I do not think that they would have this irrepressible feeling that they could not be anywhere other than where they are if they were not carried along by a feeling of absolute community... something to be explored further.<sup>8</sup>

Then Lacan moved on curiously to another important commentator of the events, Raymond Aron:

There is someone whom I could not say I do not esteem, he is a comrade, we sat on the same benches, with links together and we got to know one another. It is a friend, M. Raymond Aron, who published an article this morning in a paper that reflects the thinking of honest people who say: it is happening everywhere. But in saying that, for him that means precisely everywhere they make the same racket. Everyone needs to calm them following what's wrong in each place.<sup>9</sup>

Aron was alluding to student unrest in American universities (Lacan added that he knew people at Columbia who confirmed this) and in Poland. Praising the article's style and tone, Lacan added that it missed something: there must be a more structural basis, even if the globalization of the phenomenon appeared as a new historical factor. The structural knot that Lacan was looking for would have to be situated at the hinge between knowledge and truth. Such a knot could be probed or assessed by psychoanalysis, since as a discourse, psychoanalysis was also interested in the transmission of its knowledge, even though it could not be via the same channels as academic institutions.

Aron's article added that current teachings (including Lacan's own transmission) tended to miss a fundamental phenomenon that he called energetics or dynamics. Such a question seemed to worry Lacan, who, immediately after, praised Cohn-Bendit without naming him. It was indeed Cohn-Bendit who, when asked by members of Lacan's school what the students expected from them, replied that they could help only by throwing paving stones at the police with his group of radicals. Lacan jokingly developed the idea that a paving stone could embody the notion of *objet petit a*... Anyway, the sudden juxtaposition of Aron and Cohn-Bendit is remarkable: the liberal-turned-conservative who kept denouncing the "imaginary revolution" of well-off students and their vain psychodrama is side by side with the activist. Lacan refused to align himself with either, but, facing their contradictory positions, attempted to situate their discourses in a psychoanalytic context.

He had learned from Aron as well as from his meeting with radical leaders of the student movement that Wilhelm Reich was a forceful influence on the Nanterre group, which led him to state his disagreement bluntly: "Reich's ideas are not simply incomplete, they are demonstrably, fundamentally false" (Seminar of 05/15/1968). He argued on the other hand that it was because psychoanalysts had failed to bear witness to their experience concerning sexuality that these misguided ideas had spread. This seemed to him to be confirmed by an issue of the Catholic journal, *Concilium*; there, the issue of the marriage of priests was discussed as if psychoanalysis had nothing to contribute. However, Lacan affirmed his solidarity with the students on strike, asserting that his having signed a letter of support was quite natural, since anyone could happen to be pounced upon and beaten up by the police.

As an interesting aftermath to this seminar, in its last session, Lacan admitted that those who had been missing were not students busy with demonstrations, but the group of older analysts, those for whom he wanted to define the limits and conditions of a psychoanalytic act. He saw in the wake of the May events the confirmation of an ineluctable split between his school and the psychoanalytic community. But in a very symptomatic gesture, Lacan borrows de Gaulle's formula to express his own disgust with traditional psychoanalysts:

We live in an area of civilization where, as they say, there is free speech, namely, that nothing of what you say is of any consequence. You can say anything whatsoever about someone who may well be at the origin of an undecipherable murder or other; you can even write a play about it. The whole of America—the New York part, no more—crowds into it. Never previously in history would such a thing have been conceivable without the theatre being immediately closed. In the land of liberty, one can say everything, because this has no consequence.

It is rather curious that from the moment simply when some paving stones start flying, for at least a moment everyone has the feeling that the whole of society might be involved in it in the most direct way in its daily comfort and its future.

We have even seen psychoanalysts questioning the future of the trade. To my eyes, they were wrong to question it publicly. They would have done better to keep it to themselves, because all the same, people who saw them questioning themselves about it (...) found this a little funny. In any case one cannot say that the stock of psychoanalysis rose!

I have a crow to pluck with the General. He stole a word from me that for a long time I had—it was certainly not, of course, for the use that he made of it: psychoanalytic diarrhoea (*la chienlit psychanalytique*). You cannot imagine for how long I wanted to give that as a title to my seminar. Now the chance has gone!<sup>10</sup>

Even if Lacan assured his audience that he didn't use General de Gaulle's infamous term to brand the French students' disorder (who would be seen as literally "shitting in their own beds," which was not so bad as he too saw that the rebellion had come mostly from the children of the bourgeoisie, reluctantly followed by the children of the proletariat), there is clearly an identification not with the leaders of the "contestation" but with the father-figure, the aged founder of the Fifth Republic. I have had the opportunity to observe that they both went to the same school, Collège Stanislas, and shared a similar family background. De Gaulle, after he came back from Germany where he had considered a military action against the insurgents, launched the phrase: "*La réforme, oui, la chienlit, non!*" (Reform yes, chaos no!) The June elections were a major success for the Gaullists as the country, frightened by the spectre of civil war and chaos, rallied around the General. It took another failed referendum in April 1969, which was a sort of self-engineered political suicide, for de Gaulle to act upon what appeared then to be his lack of popularity. He resigned the presidency on 28 April 1969, retired and died in 1970. Lacan's continued identification with the General extended beyond the immediate moment of the "events"; we see him pondering the implications of a political power ready to "resign" in the session of the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1969—the "fever" seminar to which I will return soon. When no-one, in spite of his requests, dares ask a question, he comments: "Don't incite me to being discouraged, for I too might well be tempted to resign."<sup>11</sup>

In May 68, de Gaulle had coined the phrase "chienlit" so as to imply that the leftist students had just "fouled their own nest." This was something that Lacan saw as emblematic of what was wrong as much with the students as with official psychoanalysis: most psychoanalysts had fouled their nests when they had failed to remain true to the revolution in human subjectivity brought about by Freud. Was there hope on the side of the heady mixture of Marxism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and anarchism brought together in an incandescent brew by radical leftists? Lacan clung to that hope, all the while aware that they were gullible and easily deluded. In the same June seminar, he made a typical aside about the logic of the excluded middle (something has to be either true or false): "*Naturellement c'est bébé comme le mouvement du 22 mars.*"<sup>12</sup> But was he the father or the grandfather, literally grand-parenting a movement that risked spinning out of control?

In spite of all this, the June 1968 seminar closed on a militant note. It began with this: "*Je ne suis pas un truqueur,*"<sup>13</sup> meaning: "I am not a cheater;" and it ended with a riff on prophecy: "It is at the level of the subject, in so far as the subject is purified, that science takes its point of departure. At the level of the Other, there's nothing

but prophecy. On the other hand, it is at the level of the Other that science becomes totalised, and thus, for the subject, becomes alienating. What matters now is to know whether there might still be for the subject something of the order of prophecy.”<sup>14</sup> In between, he deplored that he had had to suspend his discourse on the psychoanalytic act, having barely developed one half of what he had prepared because its main audience, made up of professional psychoanalysts, had vanished.

The seminar resumed in November 1968, and the first session offered no hint of changes brought about by the previous Spring—Lacan pursued the elaboration of new mathemes and formulas. The only topical allusion was to Althusser and his disciples, whose structuralist reading of Marx (in *Reading Capital*) Lacan had decided to emulate; Marx paves the way to a new understanding of the object a caught up in the economy of *jouissance*. This was a revamping of the concept of *Mehrlust* defined as homologous or parallel to *Mehrwert*. Lacan expanded this notion at the second meeting, offering a framework in which capitalism plays a fundamental role: the May “events” can be understood as a symptom of capitalism, a clash between knowledge and truth, or better said, between the capitalistic accumulation of knowledge and the irruption of a truth linked with a surplus *jouissance*.

I have been looking for the root of what has been ridiculously called the *events*. There hasn't been any event in this business but I'll explain this to you later. // The process by which science gets unified (...) reduces all knowledge to a single market. (...) What is it, then, that represents the discontent in civilization, as one says? It is a surplus *jouissance* (*plus-de-jouir*) brought about by a renunciation of *jouissance*, while the principle of the value of knowledge has been respected.<sup>15</sup>

This is less close to the “repressive hypothesis” denounced by Foucault than it seems. Lacan sees May 68 as having been a gigantic strike of knowledge, at the issue of which a truth should have been voiced—but it was lost. The perverse effect of the whole process was in the end to modernize old-fashioned French institutions where knowledge used to be dispensed so as to make them more competitive, taylorized, bureaucratic, in brief “more modern”:

The way in which everyone suffers in his or her rapport to *jouissance*, in so far as we only connect to it by the function of surplus-*jouissance*, this is the symptom—it appears from this, that there is only an average, abstract social truth.

This results from the fact that a knowledge is always paid at its price but below the use-value that truth generates, and always for others than those who are in truth. It is thus marked by surplus-enjoyment. And this *Mehrlust* laughs at us since we don't know where it's hidden.

This is where things are at, my dear children. That's why in May, all hell got loose.<sup>16</sup>

Then Lacan qualifies the uprising with more precision—alluding rather ironically to a recent book by Michel de Certeau, *La Prise de Parole: pour une nouvelle culture*.<sup>17</sup> In that book, completed on 9 September 1968, De Certeau, who was not only a Jesuit and a good historian of religious possession but also a member of Lacan's school, compares the May uprising with the first days of the French Revolution: “*En mai dernier, on a pris la parole comme on a pris la Bastille*”<sup>18</sup> Lacan quotes this when he adds:

This was a great *prise de parole*, as somebody who has in my field a non negligible place has stated. *Prise de parole?* I think that it would be a mistake to give this *prise* a homology with any *prise de la Bastille*. *Une prise de tabac ou de came, j'aimerais mieux*.<sup>19</sup>

Punning on the homophones of *prise* used in equivalents of “taking the floor to speak,” “the storming of the Bastille” and “a pinch of snuff,” Lacan indicates that he has not been impressed by De Certeau's main contention. De Certeau's lively and positive book asserts that the students and strikers attacked not real objects

but symbolic structures. For them, it was less the power as such that they “contested” than their inability to be taken seriously in the Symbolic. As De Certeau concludes, the rejection of an older society aimed at questioning knowledge in the name of an Other that had been swept under the carpet or rejected at the margins.<sup>20</sup> As he writes, the “other” had reappeared in the midst of science as a speech that questions it from within. De Certeau concluded by quoting Marx, who refused to be swept away by the universal enthusiasm during the 1848 revolution—he was studying political economy. The real task was to continue thinking along the lines of this revolutionary event.

This was nevertheless identical to the stance taken by Lacan in the fall of 68, and he stressed all along the need to progress in his theory. At the same time, he was aware of the political role played by his own theory. De Certeau had provoked him to an awareness of the stakes implied when he had quoted in *La Prise de Parole* a book published by another psychoanalyst, Didier Anzieu.<sup>21</sup> Anzieu’s book on May 68 had concluded that the “events” proved that Sartre’s ideas had triumphed over those of Lacan. Anzieu had signed *Ces idées qui ont ébranlé la France* with the pen-name of Epistémon, and claimed that the “events” confirmed that Carl Rogers, with his theory of group dynamics, had crushed the obscure scholasticism of the Lacanians, thus that Sartre’s renewed leftism had defeated an all-too-staid structuralism. For his own part, de Certeau expressed his scepticism and blamed this hasty judgment on a professor’s mannerism (“*un tic de professeur*”).<sup>22</sup>

Like most commentators, de Certeau noted the somewhat nostalgic mode of many May slogans—along with the practice of heaping up paving stones to make barricades, a hangover from the Paris insurrections in the 1830s, 1848 and 1871. The Paris Commune, with its blend of anarchism, utopian socialism and neo-Marxism was a dominant utopia in 1968. This is why most of the mottos had a quotational air and knowingly returned to the slogans of Spanish anarchists during the civil war, the jokes of Dadaists, or the neo-Romantic tags of the Surrealists. It was also obvious that quite a few slogans came from Lacan’s teachings, including the word *jouissance* that was spreading on all the walls of Paris.

Thus De Certeau’s book was a useful reminder that now that the time of neo-futurist “*parole in liberté*” had passed, one would have to write, that is work theoretically, in order to make sense of the “events.” It was for such a task that traditional psychoanalysis proved most inadequate. A little later in the Seminar, in the Spring of 1969, Lacan mentioned with great disdain another book on the ‘68 events published by two psychoanalysts from the Paris Psychoanalytic Society (IPA), Bela Grunberger and Janine Chasselet-Smirguel. Under the pseudonym of André Stéphane, they had published *L’Univers Contestationnaire* (an obvious allusion to the “*univers concentrationnaire*,” which implied that they saw the leftists as totalitarian Stalinists).<sup>23</sup> Here, Lacan was totally scathing:

Its title is such a disgrace that I won’t quote it here. Under the explicit pretence of being two psychoanalysts, which they confess from the start, the book pretends to take stock of what they refer to as “contestation.” After that, you know what to expect. Psychic regression, infirmity, sordid infantilism of all those who manifested themselves (...) bring them back into a certain analytic framework. This never goes further.<sup>24</sup>

Lacan discussed at some length the fact that the authors had never belonged to his school, feeling some comfort that no-one from his school would abase themselves to such low drivel. The idea that the “revolutionaries” were infantile, caught up in an Oedipal revolt against the Father, had proved irresistible for traditional psychoanalysts. These same IPA analysts would also denounce the intellectual “terrorism” that they saw coming from Lacan’s school. In this case, Lacan added gleefully, this alleged terrorism was justified if only it prevented this lamentable drooling. In that context, he praised “contestation” and “contestators” precisely for being able to demonstrate actively, and to insist that the freedom of ideas be no dead letter.

If we go back to the 20 November 1968 seminar in which Lacan was discussing de Certeau’s book, one can note that even though he was ironical at his friend’s enthusiasm for the May ideas, he nevertheless gave its due



to the work of leftist students:

It was positively truth that manifested itself in that occasion. A collective truth, in the sense that the general strike was in concordance with this truth. // A strike is precisely that kind of rapport that connects a group to work. It's the only one. (...) What we saw in May was truth as it was on strike. (...) Truth was spread all over the walls. (...) Even if it was at times bullshit, this was bullshit that sounded very much like Lacan's discourse. It even reproduced it textually at times. It was a coincidence, of course.<sup>25</sup>

However, just as it looks as if Lacan was going to launch into praise for the students and embrace the cause of "contestation", he veers off, takes a tangent to attack "a Communist priest" whom he nicknames "Mudger Muddle".<sup>26</sup> It took Jacques-Alain Miller's endnotes<sup>27</sup> for me to recognize Lucien Goldmann, the author of *The Hidden God*, a staunch academic Marxist who was also a well-known patriarch in the Latin Quarter. Obviously, as Miller notes, Lacan expected Goldmann to be present at this seminar, as he had just met him in the street. Goldmann's ultimate weapon was a reference to Lukács—he would threaten everyone of not being faithful to *History and Class Consciousness*, no doubt a threat to Lacan. To defuse his Lukàcian bolts, Lacan strikes in advance:

What is strange is the passionate interrogation that came from the soul of someone I'll call the communist priest (you recognize his silhouette) whose goodness had no limits in nature. One can trust him to be duly chided and moralized, these are things that come with old age. // I'll dub him forever *Mudger Muddle*, which is my coining. This is meant to call up a crocodile and the mud in which he wallows, and the fact that, with a delicate tear, he draws you into his well-meaning world. He told me that he was looking for a Marxist theory and was then inundated by so much ambient happiness. But it hadn't come into his thick head that happiness could be generated by truth when it is on strike.<sup>28</sup>

This caricature may sound harsh if we do not know that Lucien Goldmann had turned into a relentless debunker of the "bourgeois" ideology of structuralism. One can perceive this quite well in the discussion that followed a text to which I'll return, Michel Foucault's "What Is an Author?";<sup>29</sup> a discussion at the Collège de France which Lacan attended. Goldmann was one of the first to speak after Foucault's lecture, asking a question which covers four close printed pages in the *Dits et Ecrits* volume. He attacks the wholesale "negation of the subject" that he sees in Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Althusser and of course Lacan. He stresses the better theoretical vantage-point provided by Lukács's materialist dialectics that deal with a collective subject. He ends his long peroration with a quote from the May 68 slogans: "Structures don't go down into the streets."

In fact, Goldmann was quite wrong here, as Roudinesco and many other recent historians have noted. Frédérique Mattoni's excellent "Structuralism and Prophetism",<sup>30</sup> for instance, shows to what an extent "the process of politicization" (Jacques Lagroye) had pervaded all the groups of intellectuals, particularly those who could be called "structuralists". This took place just before and even after 68. Althusser and Foucault's attacks on humanism (still defended by Goldmann) were instrumental in pushing an entire generation to the ultra-left, Mattoni contends.<sup>31</sup> This clinched the links between an apparently "scientific" discourse based on structural linguistics and the radical prophetism of younger intellectuals. Instead of Lacan, Althusser or Foucault, who took their distances and refused to play the role of the spokesmen of this radicalization, it was Sartre who acted out the part of staunch supporter of the new "Proletarian Left" till the end...

Foucault had no difficulty in replying that, contrary to what Goldmann assumed, he did not believe in the "death of the author," since unlike Roland Barthes, he needed the concept of an author so as to produce his archaeology of knowledge. The same was true of the notion of "man": by using discourses like that of Nietzsche, who prophesied about the end of man, Foucault merely aimed at analyzing the rules governing the appearance and function of the concept of "man." Echoing without knowing it Lacan's remarks on crocodile

tears, Foucault concludes snappishly: “I have done the same for the author-function. Let us thus hold back our tears.”<sup>32</sup>

But here I am anticipating, and find myself already in 1969...

## 2. LACAN’S 1969

Let’s jump ahead slightly, to the moment when Lacan began his seminar by saluting the New Year: “I wish you a happy new year. 69 is a good number.”<sup>33</sup> He saluted the new year with some flourish—as he said, “69” was a much better number than “68”—by calling attention to an article penned by a professor of linguistics, George Mounin, who had published in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* a critical examination of Lacan’s style.

This short essay is worth examining: on the whole, Lacan is accused of not having understood Saussure’s theories. It did hit home in some cases. The article, “Some Features of Jacques Lacan’s Style,”<sup>34</sup> approaches Lacan via a linguistic and rhetorical analysis. Since Lacan equated “style” with “personality,” it seemed legitimate to analyze Lacan’s deviations from standard usage and to infer from these a method. To describe what had already often been called Lacan’s “mannerism” – a labyrinthine syntax that its author had preemptively defended as “Gongorism,” a poetic manner that would force his readers to be attentive while immersing them in the fluid equivocations of unconscious discourse - Mounin listed oddities in the psychoanalyst’s use of vocabulary and syntax. On the whole Lacan, so Mounin asserted, was too fond of archaisms, poetic inversions or rare turns of phrase borrowed from German or Latin. Naming Mallarmé as a model, Mounin observed a dramatic increase in the frequency of these highly rhetorical flourishes. Mounin saw the 1966 preface to *Écrits* as verging on self-parody; he opposed the excessive theatricality of a fustian style, suggesting the image of a buffoon, to what he knew of Lacan’s personal openness, professional rigor, and availability. Such a style was above all meant to provoke and trigger debate. It forced commentators to be as excessive as the persona they saw looming in Lacan’s writings. In Mounin’s outline, the flaunting of style as style was underpinned by a program that could be summed up by three claims: a claim to science (Lacan was transforming Freud into an algebra); a claim to philosophy, whether post-Hegelian or neo-Marxist (Mounin pointed to the recurrent use of the word “dialectic”); and a claim to systemic rigor in the discourse of psychoanalysis, which involved importing scientific language, above all linguistic terms, into the domain of psychoanalysis. That last procedure was rejected by Mounin: not only had Lacan misunderstood Saussure’s concept of the sign, but he unduly privileged the signifier and collapsed it with the symptom. Mounin argued that Lacan had come late to structuralist linguistics, but then embraced it with the fervour of a neophyte who has not fully assimilated its concepts and methods.

The Parthian shaft came at the end when Mounin deplored the fact that Lacan’s influence on young philosophers of the Ecole Normale Supérieure had been encouraged by their institution. According to him, because of Lacan’s prestige, ten years of solid foundational research in linguistics had been wasted. Such a remark was to have repercussions, for indeed, at the end of the Spring of 1969, Lacan’s seminar was cancelled. Suddenly, Flacelière, the new Director of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, declared him *persona non grata*. Thus, the 25 June 1969 Seminar was devoted to scathing political remarks denouncing the Director’s double game. This led to a chaotic sit-in in his office, a fitting emblem of Lacan’s conflicted relations with official institutions. Here Lacan was following more in the steps of President Mao, who repeatedly used the younger generations as a weapon against the old guard, than in those of De Gaulle, who had haughtily dismissed France as ungovernable and resigned. It was high time to start a psychoanalytically-based cultural revolution.

This is what Lacan surmised when he reached the end of the academic year in the Summer of 1969. One year after the May events, Lacan revisited his interrupted seminar of May ‘68. Trying to understand why this seminar was left unfinished, he stressed that there was a link — not a causal link, to be sure, but one of homology — between the “events” and the inability of most psychoanalysts to think through the concept of the act.<sup>35</sup> His long discussion of Pascal’s “gamble” (the famous *pari*) was aimed at clarifying the conditions of an act. It is an *en-je*, both “stakes” and “in-I”.<sup>36</sup> The psychoanalytic act would function like a

provocation, an incitation to know. In a brilliant improvisation that can only be summarized briefly, Lacan described the link between the act, failure, and the logic of *jouissance*. He hoped that by understanding how the act works, one would avoid the acting-out into which the students' rebellion had degenerated.

The psychoanalytic act was defined as an incitation to know. Freud's fundamental rule entails that an analysand should say everything that comes to mind in the hope that this will be heard by a psychoanalyst who knows. However, the psychoanalyst only knows how to produce knowledge, even if there is a knowledge about a few fundamental things, which all hinge around the fact that there is no sexual rapport. One usually acts to compensate this lack—and this is the sexual act, an act produced without any sense that there is reciprocity or that sex is based upon logical equality. Failure is thus inscribed in the heart of sexual rapport. Its name in psychoanalytic discourse is castration.<sup>37</sup> Capitalism is the modern way of dealing with production since everything is based upon the means of production. Thus psychoanalysis inverts the process of capitalism in that it ushers in "work" with the unconscious, a work that will let truth speak without being caught up in the dialectics of surplus-enjoyment. Psychoanalysis inverts the usual links between truth and knowledge and takes knowledge beyond its common function in which it serves the exploitation of men by men.<sup>38</sup>

Lacan opened the meeting of 11 June 1969 by an allusion to his son-in-law who had been, like Paul on the way to Damascus, hit by a sudden conversion to Maoism.<sup>39</sup> Miller had confided to Lacan that the title he had chosen for this seminar was banal: from one Other to the other. Yet Lacan insisted that this trajectory alone could allow one to understand the genesis of surplus-enjoyment, something that was not to be guessed from the little red book. His own weapon would be something else: Aristotelian logic.

Thus Lacan's revolution waged in the name of Freud and of Marx would find its bearings in traditional logical squares. The new synthesis of Marx and Freud would be a logic in which the vagaries of sexual rapport and the logic of capitalistic exploitation would both find a common language. Thus it was in 1969, in the aftermath of the May '68 "events," that Lacan started elaborating systematically his own variety of Freud-Marxism; it culminates in the theory of the Four Discourses developed in the fall of 1969 in Seminar 17. This original theory mediates between Althusser's revision of the field of Marxism and Foucault's variety of critical historicism that he called "genealogy."

Lacan's elaboration was determined by two further factors: first, he wished to be known as a "structuralist" till the end (in the Fall of 1968, he asserted that he still considered himself a structuralist even if the term wasn't fashionable any longer); second, he needed to elaborate more coherently the concept of "surplus-jouissance" (*plus de jouir*) which combined, as we have seen, Freud's *Lust* with Marx's *Mehrwert*. The term surplus-jouissance had already been coined in 1967. In 1969, the term would have to account for the social function of symptoms as well as for the libidinal energies invested in social labour.

We can now return to the meeting of February 22, 1969, when Foucault had alluded to Lacan, albeit implicitly, in "What is an Author?" Lacan took part in the debate that followed, thanking Foucault for his allusion to his "return to Freud." He insisted, against Goldmann, that there was no "negation of the subject" to expect of him, only a structure of dependency in which the signifier is dominant. He adds these sharp words: "I don't think that it is legitimate to have written that structures do not go down into the streets, because, if there is something that the events of May '68 have demonstrated, it is that structures have taken over the streets. The fact that this was written just where this invasion of the streets happened proves only one thing, a very common thing, namely that what we call an act carries inherent in itself its own misrecognition."<sup>40</sup> It seemed to Lacan at that time that one section of the University was recognizing him via one of its most distinguished philosophers, and that the May '68 events had demonstrated his own theory of the act—an act necessary to make structures happen but marked by a constitutional blindness as to the meaning of what had happened. Helped by Foucault's insights and Althusser's disciples, Lacan was able to push to a higher degree of theoretical sophistication what had been launched in 1967 without a clear conceptual apparatus. This allowed him to bypass the trap into which earlier Freud-Marxisms à la Reich or Marcuse had fallen. Lacan referred to Foucault's lecture in his seminar and used

terms like “Freud event” and the “author function,” all derived from Foucault’s remapping of “authority.”

In 1969, Foucault was intent upon distinguishing his own mode of historicism from the post-formalism of Roland Barthes. For Foucault, the author-function was indispensable if one wished to write a history of culture; it was even more necessary when one was dealing with “inventors of discursivity” or “initiators of discursive practices.” As is well-known, Freud and Marx are his two examples.<sup>41</sup> The “return” operated by Althusser and Lacan to their foundational texts did not simply point out lacks or gaps but transformed discursive practice governing a whole field: “A study of Galileo’s works could alter our knowledge of the history, but not the science, of mechanics; whereas a re-examination of the books of Freud or Marx can transform our understanding of psychoanalysis or Marxism.”<sup>42</sup> Thus if Marxism and psychoanalysis cannot have the status of hard sciences, it is because they are in debt to the texts of a founder whose legacy is marked by constant textual work: “In saying that Freud founded psychoanalysis, we do not simply mean that the concept of libido or the technique of dream analysis reappear in the writings of Karl Abrahams or Melanie Klein, but that he made possible a certain number of differences with respect to his books, concepts and hypotheses, which all arise out of psychoanalytic discourse.”<sup>43</sup> In opposition to scientific inventors, the “founders of discursivity” cannot be accused of error since “there are no ‘false’ statements in the work of these initiators”,<sup>44</sup> and it is precisely for this reason that their theories demand a regular reactivation. Marx’s and Freud’s “constructive omissions” require an endless return to the origin. Such a “return” will not entail respectful imitation but reading strategies that are also by themselves a rewriting.

In 1966, Lacan had commented on his return to Freud in the introduction to *Écrits* by saying that he had taken Freud “against the grain” or “in reverse” (*à l’envers*): “an inverted reawakening (*reprise par l’envers*) of the Freudian project characterized our own” (“Of our Antecedents”).<sup>45</sup> Here is the genesis of the 1969-70 seminar on *L’envers de la psychanalyse*, which was originally called *La Psychanalyse à l’envers*. Lacan mentions on pages 10-11 “une reprise ... du projet freudien à l’envers” and adds: “C’est donc écrit bien avant les événements—une reprise par l’envers.” By “événements”, read of course May ‘68...

In Foucault’s methodological meditation on his previous books, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, published in 1969, he develops his treatment of Marx:

[C]oncepts like those of surplus value of falling rates of profit, as found in Marx, may be described on the basis of the system of positivity that is already in operation in the work of Ricardo; but these concepts (which are new, but whose rules of formation are not) appear—in Marx himself—as belonging at the same time to a quite different discursive practice: they are formed in that discursive practice in accordance with specific laws, they occupy in it a different position, they do not figure in the same sequence...<sup>46</sup>

The concepts may be the same, but their articulation and their enunciation are different. Foucault explained that he had replaced the older term “knowledge” (*savoir*) by that of “discursive formation.” Finally, in “The Discourse of Language” Foucault attacked the ideological manners of eliding the reality of discourse. He proposed a “reversal” that looks for the “source” of the discourse, then a principle of discontinuity (the discourses exclude one another), followed by a principle of specificity (it is less the idea that each discourse has its originality than the notion that discourses are opaque and violent), and finally by a principle of exteriority (one should just look for the appearance and the regularity and not look for a hidden core since what counts above all are the external conditions of appearance of each discourse).

Similarly, Lacan, even if he did not consider the “positivities” deposited in archives, libraries, histories of institutions like the clinic or the prison, chronicles of reigns and conquests, nevertheless posited several discourses, built on the concepts elaborated in previous seminars. This “formalization of discourse” yielded four structures of enunciation, four “discourses” that did not overlap with constituted areas of knowledge but posited matrices that could be used or inhabited by different subjects. They generated utterances in a context

of social networks determined by power, seduction, demand and desire. Their interaction was the result of the permutations of four terms, the barred subject of desire ( $\$$ ), language caught in its material aspect via a key signifier (S1), unconscious knowledge (S2), and a missing object forcing  $\$$  to long for more and also produce more (a). Thus the four discourses grid elaborated in 1971 was Lacan's response to Foucault's archeology and to Althusser's Marxism:

U	M	H	A
$\frac{S2 \longrightarrow a}{S1 \quad \$}$	$\frac{S1 \longrightarrow S2}{\$ \quad a}$	$\frac{\$ \longrightarrow S1}{a \quad S2}$	$\frac{a \longrightarrow \$}{S2 \quad S1}$
discourse of the University	discourse of the Master	discourse of the Hysteric	discourse of the Analyst

The grid repeats with minor modifications the basic pattern of Aristotelian and then medieval logic, moving from one term to its opposite, then to its contrary, and to the negation of the contrary. A and E as well as I and O are contraries while A and O and I and E are contradictories in the traditional terminology:

A	—	E	Sameness	Alterity
I	—	O	Identity	Difference

The four corners of the square correspond to four levels of agency, the top line indicating a visible axis of determination, while the bottom line (with at times a recursive arrow in some variations) is the hidden locus of "truth" or production. Thus each square or "revolving quadripode," as he calls them in Seminar XVII,<sup>47</sup> can be viewed as made up of two fractions working between the latent level (bottom line) and the explicit level (top line). Besides, if three terms are well known — S1 is the master signifier, S2 unconscious knowledge, the barred  $\$$  is the barred subject of desire — it is more surprising to see the letter "a" referring this time not to the old "object petit a," that is the psychoanalytic object missing as such and causing desire, but to "surplus-jouissance" or, literally, a request for "more enjoyment" (*plus-de-jouir*).

Why are there only four discourses whereas twenty-four discourses would be thinkable if one exhausted the possibilities of the combinatory? It is because each discourses generates the following by a simple rotation of a quarter-circle. The order of the letters does not change, which allows one to inscribe a genealogy and a circularity in a mathematical "deduction" of one from the other. Two couples seem nevertheless opposed or perhaps embraced in an endless *pas de deux*. The Master and the Hysteric appear complementary and they replace the old Hegelian categories of the master and the slave. The Psychoanalyst and the Academic are also opposed and complementary and they replace Lacan's old opposition between psychoanalysis and philosophy on the one hand, psychoanalysis and psychology on the other.

If we were to use names to exemplify the four discourses we might thus have in a direct Kojévian lineage Stalin (or Napoléon) and Socrates (or Hegel) as the master and the hysteric and then Freud and Ricoeur (mentioned in Seminar XVII) as the analyst and the academic respectively. But where would Marx be? And where is Lacan? And where am I? Can I choose to "perform"—as Judith Butler would say—whichever discourse I want? Or am I determined by the structure it describes? Lacan writes on p. 46 of the Seminar that he does not identify with any position, a move that is necessary if he does not want to be accused of being both in one of the four discourses and above or behind them as their inventor or interpreter.

Let us note that Lacan's four discourses are not clinical categories: they do not overlap with structures like the discourse of the obsessional, of the hysteric, of the psychotic or of the pervert. Later, Lacan added the discourse

of Capitalism or the discourse of Science, but four positions and only four would have to account for the entire structure of the social link. Science can be associated with the discourse of the Hysteric in so far as it aims at procuring new knowledge, while it is linked with the discourse of the University when this knowledge is merely catalogued and transmitted. Similarly, the discourse of Capitalism falls under the sway of the discourse of the Master, since it is also the discourse of power, of the institutions, of the State. This is also why Lacan could tell leftist students who engaged in “subversion” that, if the Soviet or Maoist models of society they admired embodied the domination of the discourse of the University as a dream of the Bureaucracy achieving power, they themselves are in quest of a Master. Unhappily for them, they will have him, he famously quipped.<sup>48</sup> Was he really misunderstood by the many who then took *him* as a master?

It seems that Freud had adumbrated the logic of some of these discourses when he posited three “impossible tasks”—to educate, to govern and to heal. To these three tasks, Lacan adds a fourth one, summed up by the desiring subject exemplified by the discourse of the Hysteric. Freud had famously written: “It almost looks as if analysis were the third of those “impossible” professions in which one can be quite sure of unsatisfying results. The other two, much older-established, are the bringing-up of children and the government of nations.”<sup>49</sup> Freud outlines the respective responsibilities of the Master, the Academic and the Analyst. Following this insight, Lacan’s logical grid of discourses attempts to identify points of impossibility via four fundamental discursive patterns. These formalize what Bourdieu calls the *socius*—society seen as a network of symbolic practices—from the point of view of psychoanalysis.

One should not object that psychoanalysis falls back on the idea of a metalanguage, which is consistently denounced by Lacan: here, the analyst’s discourse is only one among four. Society is caught from the specific angle of psychoanalytic practice, a practice in which everything is by definition reduced to speech and its effects, but also a practice that highlights what is most commonly forgotten in these issues: it stresses the place and function of the subject’s enjoyment, asks what is the main signifier that can provide ideals or a program, and looks for a dialectisation of knowledge (understood as “unconscious knowledge”) and *jouissance* under the shape of an elusive or impossible object, this “surplus enjoyment.”

Quite consistently, Lacan resisted what he saw as the institutionalisation of his teachings via the university. Perhaps the main danger for him at that time was to be understood badly and quickly in certain theses he saw appearing about his work. In his Preface to Anika Lemaire’s thesis, he mentions jocularly the translation of his Rome discourse by Anthony Wilden: “My Rome Speech, ten years after its publication, turned into the adventure of an intellectual emerging to the light in an American university, having come from a trapper’s tunnel, to my surprise.”<sup>50</sup> To counter the risk of an always-possible deviation, the four discourses manifest the last efflorescence of structuralism in Lacan’s thought. It was via his “discourse” that he wanted to have an impact not only on enshrined academic culture but also on everyday social interactions.

In “Radiophonie”, it is the couple academic/psychoanalytic that dominates. As we have seen, at one point, Lacan mentions a “discourse of capital”: “For Marx, with the plus-value that his chisel detached so as to reconstitute it to the discourse of capital, paid the price one has to put to negate, as I do, that any discourse be pacified by a meta-language (of Hegelian formalism in that case); this price, he paid it by forcing himself to follow the naive discourse of ascendant capitalism, and by the hellish life he gave himself thereof. // This verifies what I say about the *plus-de-jouir*. The *Merxwert*, is the *Marxlust*, that is Marx’s own *plus-de-jouir*.”<sup>51</sup>

Could one say as well that the theory of the four discourses was Lacan’s *surplus-enjoyment*? At least he expected actual consequences to be generated from this grid. Elsewhere in “Radiophonie”, he voices scepticism in regard to political activism of the leftist type. He then offers the following anecdote:

I remember the uneasiness of a young man who wanted to be Marxist and had gotten mixed up with a group of members of (the one and only) Party who showed up in strength (God knows why) to my paper on “The dialectic of desire and the subversion of the subject in psychoanalysis.” I was very nice

(I am always nice) and mentioned in *Écrits* the confusion that I felt before the following response from this audience member, 'Do you think that you can expect to have any kind of effect from writing a few letters on the blackboard?' Such an exercise, however, had its effects: and I have the proof—my book [*Écrits*] was rejected by the Ford Foundation that supports such gatherings in order to clean them up. The Foundation found it unthinkable to publish me. It is just that the effect that is produced has nothing to do with communication of *la parole*, and everything to do with the displacement of discourse.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, the Ford Foundation that had refused to fund the translation of *Écrits* into English had funded that of Heinz Hartmann's *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation*, a book written in Vienna in the thirties and published in English in 1957.<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, Hartmann asserted that the ego should not be seen as the site of conflict between superego and id, but as a function of compromise whose good functioning would lead to accommodation with an unquestioned *reality*. Hartmann was president of the IPA during the years of Lacan's marginalisation; the rejection by the American foundation was doubly insulting. However, here Lacan chides the Communist activist for his naïveté: the demand for "an immediate effect" belongs to a fantasy of political efficacy doubling critical resistance. Precisely because he is aware that American institutions exert invisible political effects on post-war intellectual life, Lacan cannot trust leftist tactics of immediacy. Lacan's position entails a double refusal: he first resists the Marxist call to immediate and effective action; he also resists reworking his writings to suit the humanistic standards of the Ford Foundation which had funded, among many others, Raymond Aron.

What matters here is the possibility of changing dominant discursive practices that underpin this subtle veil of alienation which we can call "ideology" by introducing new modalities of "discourse." The "displacement of discourse" Lacan wants to achieve is far from the bombastic belief that society will be changed all of a sudden by revolutionary outburst or a general strike. In other words, through his ubiquitous presence and absence in and out of a discursive grid of transformations, Lacan refuses a last temptation, that is playing the role of "baby-sitter of History": "When one will acknowledge the kind of *plus-de-jour* that makes one say "Wow, this is somebody!", then one will be on the way toward a dialectical matter maybe more active than the Party fodder (*chair à Parti*, punning both on "chair à canon", cannon fodder, and on "chair à pâté" patty filling) commonly used as baby-sitter of history (*baby-sitter de l'histoire*)."<sup>54</sup> Even if the articulation of the four discourses may be ultimately credited to the "cunning" (*List*) of a History that arranges everything, at least understanding its very grid should make us aware that it is as important to refuse to be "cannon fodder" for its slaughter-bench as to be wary of not playing the nice but deluded role of "baby sitter" while the grown-ups continue their seductive tricks or strategies aiming at accumulating power (which was, let us not forget, Dora's position and predicament).

The last decade of Lacan's teachings evinces even greater condensation. After '69, the formulations of the seventies give way to a simpler numerical progression: Lacan counts only to 1, 2, 3...4. The One corresponds to the major enigma of Being as One. Lacan repeats: "There's the One" which accounts for the link between the soul and love in Seminar XX. Two: There are two sexes, and no subject can be said to be determined by biology alone as a fate, since the formulas of sexuation show how one can place oneself either under the sign of castration (defining normal male sexuality) or outside, in a "feminine position" of *jouissance* that is not ruled by castration. Three: there are three registers, and three only, the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary, and they should ideally be tied together in a Borromean knot stressing their complete interdependence and lack of hierarchy. Four: One finds the fourth ring of the Symptom as the *sinthome* which emerges with Joyce. In parallel, Lacan announced an "Other" sexuality that would not posit itself under the domination of the phallus, and aligns it with writers who, from Marguerite de Navarre to Marguerite Duras, throw new light on a non-phallic *jouissance*, similar to the *jouissance* of the mystics.

## CONCLUSION

Was the key to May '68 and its aftermath another of Gainsbourg's notorious songs of 1969, "*Je t'aime moi non plus*," with its vividly simulated sounds of female orgasm? Its graphic lyrics combine wild eroticism ("I come and go between your hips and I hold back") with dire prediction ("Physical love is a dead end street"). In any case, the famous couplings and uncouplings of Jane Birkin and Serge were to last more than one year... But above all, was the title to be understood as "I love you—neither do I" or "I love you—not as much as I do"? I'll leave this open—each of you can make a decision.

On the whole, I would be tempted to take this as a symptom of the pervasiveness of Lacan's teachings at the time. And since it is time to conclude for good, I'll end with an anecdote. I have mentioned Lacan's sarcasm facing Lucien Goldmann. As another consequence of the aftermath of May '68, Lacan was to meet another Goldman, Pierre Goldman this time. One of the disgruntled revolutionaries, Pierre Goldman was moving into "direct action." Goldman was in Cuba with revolutionaries, returned to Paris in the fall of 1967, did not actively take part in the May events, but, after the triumph of the right, headed off again for Latin America (he left in September 1968). Seeing himself as a French Che Guevara, he went to Venezuela where he militated for a year or so with an armed revolutionary. Then in September 1969, he returned to Paris and immediately started a series of hold-ups, first with pharmacies. This was when he devised the plan of holding-up Lacan; he would subdue him with a gun, force him to recite poems by Antonin Artaud, another of "society's suicides," and make off with a fortune in cash (since Lacan, it was well-known, would receive a little fortune from his patients every day). Pierre Goldman went to rue de Lille with an accomplice. As they were going up the stairs, Lacan was leaving with Gloria, his secretary. Goldman was too awed by Lacan's face to attack him: "But when I saw this thinker with his white hair, I was startled, struck, impressed: never could I point a gun at him. I said so to my assistant and we left."<sup>55</sup> In April 1970, he was arrested for the murder of two pharmacists, who had been killed in another botched hold-up. He spent five years in jail where he wrote his *Souvenirs obscurs d'un Juif polonais né en France*.<sup>56</sup> Condemned to life in jail, he was acquitted after a second trial. Just after having been released, on Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> 1979, he was shot to death in front of his apartment by extreme-right terrorists. The killers were never found. His younger brother Jean-Jacques Goldman had by then become a beloved French pop-star and he dedicated his next concert to his dead brother. Goldmann had become famous for a single hit with an almost Lacanian title, "*Il suffira d'un signe*." Jean-Jacques Goldman has written almost all the best-known songs for singers Celine Dion, Marc Lavoine, Johnny Halliday, Patricia Kaas, Khaled, etc. When Serge Gainsbourg died in 1991, Goldman was the best-known French pop singer on the left, with the Socialists.

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## NOTES

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